$2.25 April 24, 1998

COMMONWEAL

CITIZEN SOLDIER : JAMES FINN

"Tell th' old man I'm sittin' up wit' two sick friends."

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John Garvey on JONESBORO

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Estne tu Romano?

Do you ever say (in *Commonweal*) "Roman Catholic" instead of just "Catholic?" I'm a Catholic too, and *not* an Anglo-Catholic (!), although I'm a parishioner of an Episcopal church. And, I wish they (we) had a publication as good as *Commonweal*!

JOHN FESPERMAN
Mitchellville, Md.

An 'Amistad' coda

Unlike Richard Alleva [*Amistad*, February 13], I enjoyed the film so much that I went home and took down my copy of Samuel Morison's *The Oxford History of the American People* to learn more about the case and the man of the film. Morison concludes: "The ironic epilogue is that Cinqué, once home, set himself up as a slave trader."

This shocking and disturbing fact is missing from Speilberg's epilogue to the film in which he plays upon our emotions by telling us only that Cinqué returned to Africa to find his family missing or killed. If Spielberg's researchers knew that much then they must have known about Cinqué's complicity in the slave trade. I am not aware of any reviewer calling the public's attention to this gross distortion.

And I wonder what Gordon Marino would have to say of this bit of history ("Apologize for Slavery?" February 13)? Should Cinqué's descendants have to apologize for his selling his fellow Africans into slavery?

Truth is an annoyingly complicated factor in human life, but it is the truth that shall make us free. Hollywood and Spielberg are not interested in truth, but reviewers and columnists might provide a better service if they did a little more homework in pursuit of it.

GEOFFREY B. GNEUHS
New York, N.Y.

From the heartland

Just a note (from the heartland) to thank you for publishing three careful and documented views on whether the Catholic Theological Society of America is a "wasteland" ("How Catholic is the CTSA?" March 27).

In any healthy family, school, university, or human association serious, thoughtful dialogue ought to be admired and encouraged. Thank you for helping us do that, *vis-à-vis* the CTSA, as we try to balance our God-given rationality and our respect for the magisterium of our beloved church.

JAMES P. SHANNON
Wayzata, Minn.

Boston College I

Congratulations to *Commonweal* for providing what the 1997 CTSA Convention conspicuously failed to provide: a robust and critical exchange of theological views.

The responses to the major papers were little more than résumés or endorsements that merely reinforced the direction that Peter Steinfels rightly characterizes as being "away from positions taken from Trent through Vatican II and toward positions much more congenial to the Reformers and in general to their liberal and low-church descendants."

However, as one who was an active participant in the convention, I want to suggest that the "unacknowledged grid" that Steinfels found operative runs deeper than the issue of the ordination of women (important as this undoubtedly was). I locate it in the growing substitution of generic appeals to the Spirit in place of the very particular appeals to Jesus Christ as Lord. This better accounts for the multifaceted "diffusion" that Steinfels acutely perceives. Loss of Christological normativity both propels and rationalizes the drift away from the words of eucharistic institution, away from the acknowledgment of the distinct sacramentality of holy orders, away from full Catholic communion and toward a quasi-autonomous congregationalism. Justice demands acknowledgment of the clearly Christocentric "Presidential Address" of outgoing CTSA President William Thompson. But his address, at once steeped in the Tradition and creative, was not representative of the convention's direction, nor, alas, does it appear to herald the Society's future. Like Dulles and Steinfels, I am less than thrilled at the prospect before us. What, then, is to be done?

(REV.) ROBERT P. IMBELLI
Boston, Mass.

The writer is professor of theology at Boston College.

Boston College II

Mary Ann Donovan and Peter Steinfels responded fairly and effectively to the attack of Avery Dulles on the CTSA.

I only want to add that, if one desires to size up the current state of the CTSA, one needs to survey the plenary addresses of the past several years, not those of any one year in isolation. (It is the prerogative and duty of the president-elect each year to select and invite plenary speakers, usually to reflect his or her own theological expertise and commitments.)

Moreover, one would have to consider the variety of workshops, panels, papers, and ongoing seminars and research groups, whose activities help constitute the organization. One can certainly find there represented more than one theological, ecclesial, and political standpoint. On the one hand, the 1997 convention saw essentially receptive discussion of a report highlighting the disputed nature of the authority of a Vatican statement on women's ordination. On the other, the same convention featured a panel discussion of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's "Catholic Common Ground Initiative," at which Archbishop Oscar

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COMMONWEAL

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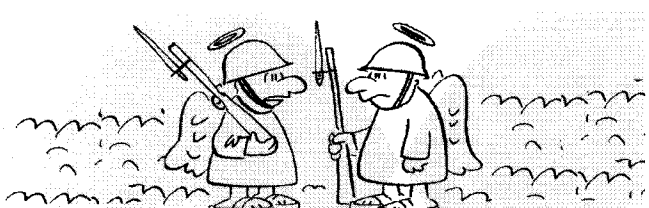

"Somehow, it never dawned on me that we'd actually participate in Armageddon."

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Lipscomb (chair) was a presenter. A recent letter from CTSA President Mary Ann Donovan informed members that a CTSA research group on "family as domestic church," formed in 1993 at the request of Cardinal Bernardin (then chairman of the NCCB Committee on Marriage and Family Life), has completed its work, work largely carried out in sessions at the annual meetings.

I think it is true that few in attendance at CTSA conventions are in total agreement with magisterial teaching on every issue, and that most are advocates of strong lay participation (along with clergy) in Catholic theology and ministry. This was reflected in the 1997 plenary addresses on the Eucharist. And, on these issues, CTSA members do not seem at great variance with the U.S. Catholic laity generally, especially those in their fifties and younger (*see* Dean R. Hoge, "Get Ready for the Post-Boomer Catholics," *America*, March 21, 1998).

Those who want the CTSA to consider more or different views should attend the conventions; participate actively in sessions; submit scholarly proposals to our program committee; and concentrate more on positive advocacy for their own take on Catholic tradition than on labeling their colleagues' endeavors a "wasteland."

LISA SOWLE CAHILL
Boston, Mass.

The writer is professor of theology at Boston College and past president of the CTSA (1992–93).

Boston College III

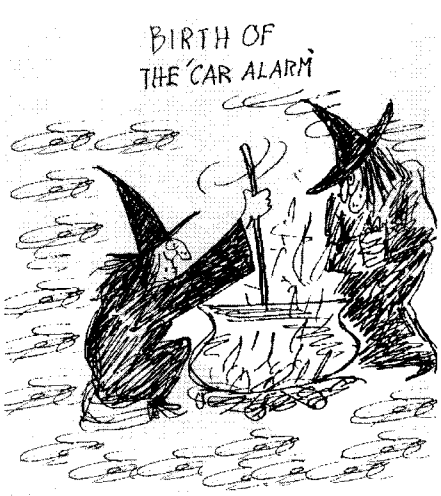
As one who attended the CTSA convention last June, I concur fully with the stark assessment of Father Avery Dulles. Sister Mary Ann Donovan falsely claims that the committee's statement contradicting the *Responsum* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the impossibility of ordaining women, and the CTSA in approving the resolution supporting the statement so overwhelmingly, "do not collectively oppose anything." At the meeting where the committee presented its statement to the convention, Sister Catherine Hilkert of Notre Dame, a committee member, stated publicly that "our task was to refute the Vatican document."

Nor is the CTSA statement, as Peter Steinfels avers, respectful, responsible, and conservative. If it were, the committee would have had some members who could have argued for the full Vatican position stated in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* and the *Responsum*. In fact not one member of the committee accepted the full Vatican position. It was anything but respectful and responsible. As several colleagues mentioned to me sadly at the time, it was more like a kangaroo court where scholarly objectivity and Catholic wisdom were set aside for biased political advocacy. I challenge any member of that committee to state publicly that he or she accepted the full Vatican position and argued for it. Everyone knows there was not one, not even one.

So this committee and the resulting statement unfortunately illustrates plainly the truth of Cardinal Bernard Law's judgment that the CTSA "has become an association of advocacy for theological dissent." As for the metaphor of "wasteland," Dulles's criticisms of the presentations are on target. The keynote presentations, as well as other publications of the presenters, indicate a lack of the intellectual habits needed to understand the theoretical achievements of, for example, the eucharistic theology of Thomas Aquinas influencing the doctrines of the Council of Trent. As Bernard Lonergan insisted, without attaining the intellectual conversion underlying the theoretical achievements of Aquinas, the efforts of contemporary theologians to present the history of Catholic doctrine and theology will fall into historicism and relativism. As I have argued elsewhere (*see*, *America*, May 26, 1990 and *Crisis*, December 1997, February 1998), there is much more that Catholic graduate programs should be doing to hand on the intellectual virtues and skills needed to measure up to the great achievements of Catholic wisdom and theology. It is a sign of what Lonergan called "the impoverishment of contemporary theology" that an attentive journalist like Mr. Steinfels has so little experience of a genuine theological garden that he cannot recognize a wasteland when it is all around him.

(REV.) MATTHEW L. LAMB
Boston, Mass.

The writer is professor of theology at Boston College.



Newman's answer

A prelude to Father Avery Dulles's disaffection with the CTSA took place before the group's last meeting in New York a few years back. Invited to address a preconference session on what makes a theologian "Catholic," Dulles listed fifteen criteria, a rather high proportion of which involved adherence to the magisterium as presently defined by the Vatican.

During the questions and discussion, I asked how his criteria squared with Cardinal Newman's distinction between the hierarchy's governance of the church (the office of ruling) and the separate function of the teaching office carried on by theologians, both

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Who's sorry now?

Say you're sorry." How many times as children did we hear that parental admonition? We all learn sooner or later that, at some point in a quarrel it is better to resolve matters with an apology than to search for a settlement that will justly apportion blame. This playground etiquette has the virtue of simplicity. But as several recent attempts at apology demonstrate, just saying you're sorry does not seem to end the quarrel (*see*, Gordon Marino, "Apologize for Slavery?" *Commonweal*, February 13). In fact, some of these efforts suggest that for many forms of transgression, saying sorry is inadequate or, incomplete; or, worse, it can become the cause of renewed quarreling.

During his African tour, President Bill Clinton expressed regret for the complicity of the United States in the slave trade. But he expressed it in Uganda, which was not part of that trade, rather than in West Africa, which was. Then, he was heatedly criticized for "attacking his own country in a foreign land" by Congressman Tom DeLay (R-Tex.). When the president expressed regret for U.S. failure to intervene in time to stop the genocidal slaughter in Rwanda, he did not go on to admit that it is unlikely that the United States, or any other country, would act differently today. Conflicts over the institutional transgressions of centuries past are not likely to fade before apologies that seem merely personal and serendipitous, as Mr. Clinton's did.

On the other hand, long-prepared institutional apologies may not achieve their ends either. The Vatican's "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," eleven years in the making, failed finally to come to terms with the responsibility of the Roman Catholic church, "as such," for the Holocaust. Much of the statement sounded defensive and even complacent, thereby making the apology seem merely bureaucratic, the work of an impersonal committee.

And then there is the apology that has become a form of political grandstanding. New York's Mayor Rudolph Giuliani apologized to the family of a Hasidic man, Yankel Rosenbaum, for his murder during the 1991 Crown Heights riots. The mayor managed to insult almost everyone else—mainly the family of the African-American child, whose death in a car accident set off the riots. Though Giuliani apologized in the name of all New Yorkers, most will take their distance from an apology that seemed to grow from the mayor's politicized agenda rather than from any citywide effort to reflect on and repent the deaths of two innocent people.

Are apologies then a bad idea?

Sorry, no.

What these examples demonstrate is that apologies are more complicated than most of us imagine. Rather than making clumsy apologies, or foregoing them altogether, maybe we need to take a longer and fuller look at what apologies really require, especially when they involve historical and institutional transgressions or deep-seated public antagonisms.

What would such a process involve? What does it mean to apologize for things you didn't do yourself? What does it mean to apologize for communities, movements, or institutions, especially for long-ago evils? And how is the apology to be understood and formulated?

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- **First, what are the facts?** Serious historical study or serious fact-finding may be required. Extensive institutional analysis and critical self-examination may be needed. How did the now-contested practice come about, and how did it persist in the presence of ideas or beliefs to the contrary? Then, there has to be a recognition and precise defining of the evil, if this is in doubt; and the accurate placing of responsibility, if that is in question. Institutional analysis may be particularly difficult: bureaucracies are not organized to examine themselves, and when they do, defensiveness of the kind demonstrated in the Vatican's statement on the *Shoah* may be the result. In the United States, veterans' groups forced the closing of a 1995 Smithsonian Museum exhibition that raised questions about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Do we think that the U.S. Congress, if it went to work on the nation's history of slave trading, would do any better than the Vatican or the Smithsonian have done?

- **Second, why and how do these travesties happen?** In placing responsibility, wouldn't we have to understand why, for example, a people who had declared that all men are created equal, and fought a revolutionary war to uphold that belief, still allowed men and women to be bought and sold as chattel? Why did a people, who believed in equal protection under the law, insist that escaped slaves be returned to their owners? How could a church that taught and teaches that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God, for centuries treat the Jews with disdain, order their expulsion from Catholic countries, force their conversion, or sometimes torture and kill them as heretics? In these cases, it is not just that great evils were perpetrated, but they went on and on and on, in the face of beliefs, teachings, and ideals that held strongly to the contrary. What kind of intellectual and cultural dissonance was at work here? What evil was committed? By whom? And why? Those are some of the basic questions that need answering if there is to be true sorrow and true apology.

- **Third, what are the consequences of apologizing?** For finally there is another task to be undertaken before an apology can be made. Attention must be paid to the possible consequences of an apology. Is an apology, or demand for an apology, just another step in the construction of victim politics? If so, it may end in sparking resentment and even dismissal of any wrongdoing. Moral claims on the part of current representatives of past victims should not be inflated but must be seen to be accurate and just. Does an apology imply, as Catholic tradition has it, "a firm purpose of amendment"? President Clinton's apology in Rwanda did not seem to account for the problem of regretting hundreds of thousands of deaths while knowing that American policy still would not risk one American life to prevent such a slaughter. This apology ends in being an empty gesture.

It is not so easy to apologize. It is not even easy to figure out how an apology should be constructed. But it is not wrong for all of us to consider how we might truly begin making amends for evils from which we benefit, though we did not commit them.

THE WRIGHT DECISION

In dismissing Paula Jones's sexual-harassment suit against President Bill Clinton before it went to trial, Judge Susan Webber Wright sounded a note of clarity amidst the din of accusations surrounding the president. Judge Wright, a Republican appointed by President George Bush, ruled that even if Jones's allegations were true, such behavior, however crude, did not constitute sexual harassment under Arkansas law. The spuriousness of Jones's case was long noted by commentators familiar with sexual harassment law and not necessarily sympathetic to Clinton. Moreover, Judge Wright's decision confirms the public's suspicion that, however morally flawed Clinton may be as a husband, the attempt to criminalize his private life is largely politically motivated. In the absence of any plausible evidence linking Clinton to criminal acts, the American public rightly continues to give him the benefit of the doubt. At this juncture it is impossible to know how much truth, if any, there was in Jones's allegations concerning a vulgar sexual proposition. But one thing does seem clear. Financed and managed by right-wing groups whose transparent interest was in damaging Clinton politically, Jones sadly appears to have allowed herself to be as exploited by her advocates as she alleges she was by the then governor of Arkansas.

Several other aspects of Clinton's ongoing problems are also clearer in the wake of the Wright decision. First, last year's Supreme Court ruling allowing Jones to bring suit against Clinton is an open invitation for politically motivated attacks against any sitting president. The decision, which implausibly argued that such suits would not be an undue distraction to presidents, should be reversed. Given the president's unique role in the American constitutional system, impeachment should remain the mechanism for holding a president accountable to the law. Private civil suits should be postponed until the officeholder finishes his or her elected term.

Second, the Jones decision throws a harsh light on the four-year, and so far essentially fruitless, investigation of Independent Prosecutor Kenneth Starr. Initially appointed to determine whether the president was responsible for any Whitewater-related crimes, Starr recently has piggy-backed his efforts to the Jones case. In turning to the murky questions surrounding Clinton's sexual behavior, Starr has resorted to highly questionable tactics—including forcing the mother of Monica Lewinsky, Clinton's alleged paramour, to testify under oath about her daughter as well as subpoenaing records of Lewinsky's book purchases—and further undermined his own credibility. At this late date, Starr's foraging into Clinton's sex life seems desperate; his methods chilling. Rumors abound concerning what charges Starr may finally bring against Lewinsky or Clinton and others. But whatever Starr comes up with, the burden of proof should remain with him and with the

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House Judiciary Committee that receives his report concerning the president. Clinton may be guilty of lying under oath or obstruction of justice. But as the Jones case demonstrates, given the inherently political nature of anything touching on the presidency, it is as naive to presume a president's guilt as it is to believe his every protestation.

Finally, the independent prosecutor law must be rethought or allowed to expire. No president, Democrat or Republican, can do the job he or she is elected to do if made the object of an open-ended criminal investigation that itself is virtually unaccountable to any other branch of government.

SEED MONEY

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently went for the green. To reclaim and redevelop the nation's estimated 450,000 polluted "Brownfields," in February HUD proposed doubling the agency's current funding from $25 million to $50 million. Brownfields are mildly to moderately polluted former industrial sites that sit idle across the American landscape. Most are located in urban areas. They include old rail yards, steel mills, corner gas-station lots, and dry-cleaning shops. These parcels thrived in an era when industrial pollution was an accepted part of American life. When that changed, owners sometimes chained the gates and fled.

Today, Brownfields are eyesores and no man's lands. They are not contaminated enough to merit detoxification under the stringent criteria of the nation's Superfund. Yet they are not "clean" enough to allay the fears of local government and potential investors over the costs of cleaning them up to meet present-day environmental standards, preclude potential future law suits, or overcome public skepticism about even setting foot on them again.

After decades of neglect, however, something new is in the air. Businesses, government—local, state, and federal—community organizations, and environmentalists have decided to look again at these badlands and reclaim them for use. The Environmental Protection Agency has awarded more than 120 grants to municipalities to rehabilitate Brownfields. Environmental groups that once blocked recertification have gotten practical and agreed to a sliding scale on the "degree of purity" needed to relicense such sites. New technologies have been developed that have effectively lowered cleanup costs. And state legislatures have written new statutes that, while enforcing adequate environmental principles, protect the public and shield investors from unexpected future costs, if the cleanup has followed rigid state-approved plans.

Still, is it a good idea for HUD to get involved? Eminently. Seed money of this sort attracts other money needed to revive the languishing tracts, which in turn creates new industries and businesses where they are most needed: in poor urban centers. Recently, 125 workers started harvesting tomatoes at a new industrial greenhouse in Buffalo, built on the site of a former steel mill. According to HUD, the $50 million it plans to spend this year on Brownfields will leverage an additional $200 million in loans and loan grants, generating 28,000 jobs. Jobs mean housing and family stability: a greener future all round.

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

Something does not love us

A horror like the shootings in Jonesboro, Arkansas, makes us sharply aware of how little we understand ourselves or what it means to be human. Our ideas of good and evil are challenged when good and evil move out of the places we expect to find them, and we look for explanations: the ready availability of guns, television violence, abusive homes (though at this writing it isn't clear that either of the boys in custody came from such homes).

The meaninglessness of it, the stupidity, the thought that this could happen to any of our children at any minute—all of it terrifies—and our search for an explanation is a kind of nervous gabbing. Of course the availability of guns has something to do with it, but thousands of boys in the Midwest and the South hunt and never use guns violently; millions of kids watch television and are consequently desensitized, but not *that* much; and I know survivors of abusive homes who aren't about to start killing. We look for the specific thing that might make one or more of these factors unite to light a fuse, and we talk about prevention. Fat chance.

There is something that does not love humanity, that seeks to destroy us, and it will use whatever it can, flow through whatever little channel we allow. This idea—that there is such a thing as something that endangers us spiritually to the point of seeking our destruction, that the demonic is more than a metaphor for what we don't like—is extremely unpopular these days. It is almost always caricatured: little red guys with tails and horns and pitchforks, do we believe in that? And aren't we looking at a kind of counter-God, and isn't that un-Christian, dualistic? Didn't the idea of demons enter our tradition from the Zoroastrians and other Eastern, non-Jewish sources anyway? And aren't these kids sick, not demonic?

Among the other ideas that enter our tradition from non-Jewish sources is the Last Judgment. Should we (despite Jesus'

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reliance on the idea) scrap it? Jesus was also unpopular on the idea of the demonic: "Deliver us from evil" is a reference not to some abstract evil but, most scholars seem to agree, "the evil one." And the evil one will use anything he (or she—we must be inclusive) can, including confused and unhappy little boys, or—at a more banal level than the Jonesboro murders—unhappy wives, husbands, sons, and daughters. I know a man who spent years recovering from a single sentence. He wanted to be reassured that his dead father loved him; his mother, who hated his dead father, told him instead—deliberately withholding the word love—that his father had been proud of him. That is not what he needed to hear, and his mother's need for revenge, probably hidden to her, nearly destroyed her son. It may not seem so big a deal to you, but it was for him.

The range of evil and its way of working with us goes from this tragic domestic level to Hitler. The real mystery is not Hitler's sickness (if he was sick at all) but the fact that so many were willing, and some even happy, to follow him. We don't like to think of this as a continuum, because it is important to our self-esteem—always an illusion—to think that we are radically different, or different in some way, from those who are capable of serious evil. Our freedom makes us capable of choosing anything, and our fallenness makes us likely to make mistakes based on what will shore up our own egos, and a series of bad choices can lead us into a corner in which we might find ourselves making the choice to wound or kill someone we see as an enemy. I don't think this comes into our lives accidentally, like a draft of cold air through a door that blows open. Something is out to destroy us, and until quite recently most of Christian and Jewish tradition understood this. Evil has been defeated, but doesn't know it. That is also part of the tradition.

And something more is part of our tradition, and it has to do with something deeper than choice, something instinctive and holy: the teacher, Shannon Wright, who, hearing the shots, threw herself between the shots and the children and died to save them; and the approximately five hundred people who, without any public call, showed up to donate blood...this is a sign of something deeper and finally more true about humanity. We are made in God's image, and it shows itself in places like this.

There is no proof that God is real, or that anything in life makes any ultimate sense. All we can do is to pray that we have the discernment to live by "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11: 1). The deeper truths of what happened in Jonesboro are not to be found in the sad, stupid acts of adolescents who acted in an evil way, but in the noble—all the more noble and moving for not even having been thought about—reaction of Shannon Wright, and the kindness of people who wanted to donate blood. There is nothing clear here, only clues which can be seen as pointing in different directions. We have to pray for the boys who allowed this to happen, for their families, for the families who will never again know the presence on earth of the people they loved.

To believe that meaning can be found anywhere here is an act of faith, like the faith of the father who, after Jesus told him that all things are possible for the one who believes, cried "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" From our point of view, the father's wavering faith isn't much to work with. The wonder is that God can use even this doubting faith (the only kind most of us will ever know) to work miracles and heal; the miracle is that the most dramatic evil is finally defeated by humble and un-self-conscious acts of love. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

THE NEW IMMIGRANTS

Up close & personal

As with any surge in immigration, the current one—the second largest in this century—seems alarming to some experts. They fear that the children of these immigrants will develop into an underclass, cut off from the mainstream by academic failure and an inability to speak English. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A very interesting, recently published four-year study by sociologists Ruben Rumbaut of Michigan State University and Alejandro Portest of Princeton University indicates that, despite the doubts of some newcomers themselves, the future of these immigrants' children is bright. The study shows that the 13.7 million children of immigrants have higher grades and sharply lower dropout rates than other American children. Although more than half have experienced discrimination, a larger majority said that the United States was the best country in which to live. Overwhelmingly they prefer English to the native languages of their parents. The study serves to assure us that the country is enriched by the latest immigrant wave.

Who are these immigrants? What countries did they leave? I gave little thought to that until I was thrown into intimate contact with many—first in the hospital, then in a rehabilitation center. They throng the field of health professionals—most still on the lowest rung of the career ladder, but a majority working toward fuller degrees. Clearly they fill a need in a country whose population swells as age advances.

Without exception, those I came to know were an achieving and hard-working lot. There was Freh, born in Ethiopia, fine-featured as most Ethiopians are, and a registered nurse. She had come as a child with her parents and was educated at the University of Southern Illinois. There were a veritable corps of licensed nursing assistants—soft-voiced and smiling Rhadika and Bilhibai from south

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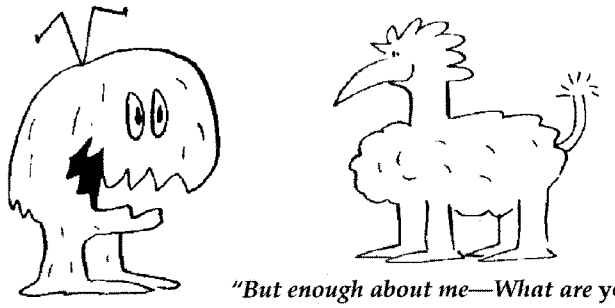
India; Juliet, Lesford, and Linda from Jamaica; another Linda from Grenada; Clara from Sierra Leone; Charito from the Philippines; Pius and Christopher obviously from a Catholic missionary enclave in Cameroon; and from South Africa a gentle woman bearing a famous name, Nono Buthelezi, niece of the South African cabinet member who was once a rival of Mandela.

Like other immigrants in other times, some of the newcomers yearn for their countries of origin and plan to return. Nono speaks lyrically about the region around Durban and lists the flowers and fruit trees there like a litany. She and her husband alternate semesters—one goes to the university; the other works. When they finally graduate they will go back to South Africa. ("It is not so nice here," says Nono. "It is a hard place to raise children." To our shame, this is true of inner-city Washington. "And we can help our country.") Linda from Grenada and her husband also plan to return once they have their degrees. "It is nice at home, but not many jobs," Linda explains. "If we are educated, there are jobs for us."

On the other hand, many of these prospective citizens are enthusiastic about this country and the opportunities it offers them. Lesford tells of working three jobs and bringing up his three children alone after his wife left him. He is proud of his son in the Air Force and his other two children in school. He managed to buy a house in neighboring Prince George's County and to make a secure home for his children. But he hasn't stopped there. He gives a lot of time to helping others. He has a collection of musical instruments—some peculiar to the Caribbean—and on weekends gathers in children of less-fortunate friends to give them instrument lessons. He builds their self-esteem by finding places for them to perform—one of them entertaining the patients in the hospital where he works. In addition, he preaches in his small house church. He loves his adopted country and has only scorn for those who complain that they aren't given enough by our government. "I say to these American guys—you don't know—you just don't know!"



"But enough about me—What are you?"

Pius from Cameroon, the most compassionate and kind of nurses, has taken to other American skills with alacrity. He reported a happy weekend working on the brakes of his car—"saved maybe $200," he says with satisfaction. He also spends many hours with his computer and has become an expert in computer graphics. He delights in creating greeting cards for special occasions for his colleagues and patients. The only bachelor among the group, he says, "I'm looking, I'm looking." It goes without saying that when he finds the wife he seeks he will be a kind and responsible husband and father, and his family will be an example of "family values," albeit perhaps very different in aspect from the mental picture of those so quick to tout these values.

The new immigrants also have their dreams. Lesford rightly sees his life story as remarkable and has hopes of writing and publishing a book to inspire others. Juliet's dream is more modest. She was left behind in Jamaica when her mother and her mother's second family moved to this country and remembers her first thirteen years with her great-grandmother. That remarkable lady lived to be 111 and even as a centenarian gave Juliet a careful upbringing. "Because of her I love old people," says Juliet. "Some day I would like to have a house big enough to take in four or five older people and take care of them. I have worked in nursing homes and there are so many people who shouldn't be there but have nowhere else to go." As she awaits the fulfillment of this dream, Juliet has taken in her godmother, a former teacher of nursing who can no longer work. In turn, the godmother supervises Juliet's two sons and helps them with their manners and homework.

Some of these immigrants have survived harsh conditions that Americans might think of as causing lasting trauma. Families were often separated as one member or the other made the quota and worked to make a place here for the others. Clara speaks with pride of the self-possession of her youngest son who was left behind in Sierra Leone. When he was six and she sent for him, he made the journey here alone. (He refused to leave the plane until the attendants put his passport in his hand.) He has coped successfully with great changes in his life—getting to know the mother he had never seen and his stepfather, and going to a school where initially he did not know the language. The waiting and separation of his first years have left no lasting mark.

One of the nursing assistants had a far worse experience. Moved from family to family while she waited for her mother to send for her, she was attacked twice—once by the father in one household and once by the son in another. In still another she was beaten so badly by the woman of the house that her face bore marks for months. Mature now and caring for others, she speaks calmly of what she has endured. "You just hope and wait," she said.

Endurance, resilience, industry, good humor, and a cheery hopefulness—these were the marks of the new immigrants I came to know. Admittedly they worked in an environment where they were made to feel valuable members of a team—not always the case. ("At the first hospital where I worked," said Rhadika, "I was always a foreigner.") When welcomed they are quick to adapt to, and to love our common country, to which they bring a new energy. □

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Judith H. Banki

CATHOLICS & JEWS

Vatican Holocaust statement will help

The ambivalence of Jewish reactions to the Vatican's recent statement "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah" rings a distinct bell. Jewish interfaith leaders, except for very few who welcomed it unreservedly, expressed disappointment, annoyance—in the words of the *Jewish Week*, "everything from anguish to anger." It was "too little, too late"; it "dashed the hopes of Jewish leaders." Sound familiar?

When *Nostra aetate*, the declaration on the church's relationship to the Jewish community, was finally adopted at Vatican II and promulgated by Pope Paul VI after almost four years of equivocation and internal struggle—during which key passages were cut, restored, emasculated, and reworded—it was similarly greeted. Jewish reactions ranged from cautious enthusiasm to bitter denunciation. Negative reactions focused on the absence from the document of any sense of contrition, any expression of regret, indeed, even an acknowledgment of the church's role in creating the anti-Semitism it was now decrying.

"Boy, when you said 'only human,' you weren't **kidding!"**

Twenty years after *Nostra aetate*, in 1985, the Vatican issued one of several follow-up documents designed to translate the declaration's broad principles into specific guidelines for teaching about Jews and Judaism in Catholic education. The "Notes," as they were called, were also roundly attacked. Critics noted the schizoid nature of the document: positive affirmations about Judaism in one section were undercut by regressive, triumphalist formulations in others. Inherently contradictory theological views of Judaism were papered over by expressions of noble intention. The "Notes" appeared to reflect a tug-of-war between two incompatible mindsets toward Jews.

From a Jewish perspective, both documents were seriously flawed. Yet, they had powerful and positive consequences. *Nostra aetate*, despite its weaknesses and compromises, launched a new Catholic-Jewish relationship—one of growing candor, mutual understanding and cooperation toward shared goals, though with many ups and downs along the way. The "Notes," despite their inherent contradictions, provided the basis for more accurate, more appreciative teaching about Jews and Judaism in Catholic education. The documents were not perfect; their defects rankled those who expected more—more self-criticism, more contrition, a more scrupulous accounting of the church's role in specific historical circumstances. But they nevertheless initiated a systematic dialogue, studies and scholarship, informal networks, a fragile but genuine mutual trust, some real friendships. Committed Christians and Jews used the opportunities opened by these documents to build a new relationship.

Critics of the Vatican's "Reflections on the Shoah" should bear this history in mind, even as they express their disappointments. Yes, it has weaknesses. It falls short of a full reckoning of the role of the church in fomenting antipathy to Jews across the centuries. It attributes to individual Catholics—"sons and daughters of the church"—errors of commission and omission and failures of courage without relating these to the church's policies and practices. It calls for an individual, not institutional, examination of conscience. Its distinction between anti-Judaism—rooted in religious misconceptions—and anti-Semitism—the product of racism and exacerbated nationalism, which it sees as a pagan ideology totally opposed to Catholic values—is correct.

But, if Lutheran scholar and theologian Krister Stendahl's definition is correct ("Anti-Judaism is hostility to the *tenets* of Judaism; anti-Semitism is hostility to the *bearers* of Judaism"), the line was frequently crossed. Nazism was indeed neo-pagan in concept and ideology, but many of the regime's repressive measures against the Jews—book-burnings, quotas in universities, the mandated wearing of distinctive clothing, confinement to ghettos—had their precedents in church legislation and practice. The document does not explore these parallels, nor does it address the question of the willing perpetrators of genocide—the murderers and torturers—who considered themselves faithful Christians.

But focusing on what the document says, rather than on what it does not say, it says a good deal.

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First, it affirms as "a major fact of the history of this century" the murder of millions of Jews for the sole reason that they were Jews. It stands as a forthright rebuttal to what has become an entire industry of Holocaust denial and revision. To some 800 million Catholic faithful and to the world at large, the church says: "It happened!"

It affirms the religious roots of hostility to Jews in "erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament," and spells out the consequences when Jews refused to abandon their faith and customs: discrimination, expulsions, attempts at forced conversions, scapegoating, occasional violence, looting, and even massacres. Jews, who are familiar with this history of persecution rooted in religious antagonism, should realize that it may come as a surprise to most Catholics, and that the church has done an important service to truth and justice by calling attention to these painful realities in very concrete terms.

It adds the church's moral authority to the need to understand what gave rise to the greatest crime of the twentieth century, and to remember it, "for there is no future without memory."

The Vatican's "Reflections" open a rich field for further common study, and its expression of human solidarity should guide the footsteps of those who seek to develop its teaching and preaching implications, to the end—in John Paul II's moving words—of "shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the *Shoah* will never again be possible." □

Judith H. Banki, *both an official of and a participant in organized Jewish-Christian dialogue, is program director of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding.*

VILLANOVA
University

CAMPUS MINISTRY

Villanova University is seeking a Campus Minister in the Offices of Campus Ministry and the Center for Peace and Justice Education. The University, located twelve miles west of Philadelphia, is an independent university founded by the Augustinian Order of the Roman Catholic Church and has a student population of 10,000.

Responsibilities include: develop and maintain a specifically pastoral presence to students, faculty, staff and administration, and serve as a resource person for social justice concerns; promote and plan activities including liturgical celebrations, retreats, service and other projects which raise awareness of peace and justice concerns.

Requirements include: Master's degree in Theology, Social Services or related Peace & Justice area; knowledge of, or expertise in, Catholic Social Teaching; ability and desire to develop and teach conflict resolution skills to students, faculty and staff; develop lectures and seminars that create a more intensive academic awareness of peace and justice issues; teach three courses per year in peace and justice related issues.

Send cover letter and resume by May 1, 1998 to:

VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
Susan F. Kazmierczak, Assistant Director
Human Resources
800 Lancaster Avenue. Villanova, PA 19085
AA/EOE/M-F

Kip Sullivan

HEALTH-CARE REFORM

We still need it

Much is being made by HMO advocates of a reduction in the U.S. medical inflation rate that began around 1993. We are to believe that rising rates of enrollment in health plans that use HMO cost-control techniques account for this reduction. We are not being told that this reduction may be due entirely to a fall in the general inflation rate, rising numbers of uninsured, increased rationing of care among the insured, the "Hillary effect" (the tendency of insurers and providers to keep prices in check following an effort by the federal government to enact price or premium controls), and temporary premium reductions by insurance companies scrambling to build market share.

But the question of whether HMOs should take the credit for this blip in health-care spending seems quite secondary when we compare U.S. spending to that of other nations. The latest data indicate the United States continues to outspend the rest of the world by a huge margin. Moreover, the numbers indicate that between 1990 and 1996—the period in which HMOs strengthened their grip on the U.S. health-care system—the gap between the United States and the rest of the industrialized world increased. The data, which were prepared by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), appeared in the November-December 1997 edition of *Health Affairs*, a health-policy journal.

The OECD has been keeping track of economic and demographic data on twenty-four industrialized nations since the end of World War II (five less-prosperous countries were added after the fall of the Berlin Wall). In 1996, only five countries spent more than $2,000 per person on health care: The United States at $3,708; Switzerland at $2,412; Germany at $2,222; Luxembourg at $2,206; and Canada at $2,002. Similarly, only five countries devoted more than 9 percent of their Gross Domestic Product to health-care spending: The United States (14.2 percent); Germany (10.5); Switzerland (9.8); France (9.6); and Canada (9.2). The United States is the only first-world OECD nation without a national health-insurance system, and is the only one that sports an uninsured rate of 16 percent.

Despite the recent slowing of the medical-inflation rate in the United States, health-care spending here is rising faster than in the rest of the industrialized world. Between 1990 and 1996, for example, per capita spending increased

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Even

In a sift of ash in Wales,
at the bottom of a pit sunk
in the crucial chamber of a passage grave,
its stones cut & laid up dry
5000 years ago, about, diggers found
and anatomists identified a small
bone of the inner ear. It is that of a girl
8 to 10 years old, in perfect condition.

Lost is found. Salvation.
I happened to hear of it.

If I can hear this
what may I not hear

Sight's the electric hunger, though sensual Blake
says hearing's the most intimate appetite.

Bird what do you praise Praise it
again among the juniper plumes
& silvered-blue juniper berrybeads

Your birdpraise rivers the juniper air
until I admit the incision of listening,
and self rising easily up off the river
evaporates altered into its liberty

Marie Ponsot

by 38 percent in the United States, compared to 32 percent for the other twenty nations that had 1996 expenditures of more than $1,000 per person. Yet the high cost of the U.S. system cannot be attributed to more frequent use of the system by Americans. Among the major industrilized G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain, and the United States), in 1995 the United States had the fewest hospital beds per 1,000 people, the second-lowest proportion of the population admitted to hospitals, and the fastest discharge rate.

Inflation, in any sector, depends on the behavior of two numbers—volume of goods or services sold, and price. Conventional wisdom in America has been that volume, not price, is the primary culprit and that HMOs, which are much better at denying services than traditional indemnity insurers, are the answer to the alleged problem of excessive volume. The rest of the industrialized world long ago adopted policies based on a very different premise—that health-care inflation is caused primarily by doctors, hospitals, and drug companies that overcharge, and secondarily by excessive volume. The rest of the industrialized world long ago adopted policies that impose price controls on providers and, with a few exceptions, on drug companies. In the United States, Medicare (the nation's program for the elderly) and Medicaid (the nation's program for some of the poor) also utilize price controls. But that still leaves the nonelderly nonpoor population—a huge market pool—unprotected by price controls.

Not surprisingly, the diverging policies of the United States and the rest of the industrialized world have led to vastly different consequences. Americans are getting kicked out of hospitals sooner, seeing doctors less often, and paying much higher fees and prices. Despite a slowdown in the growth of physician income, due to pressure by HMOs, American doctors remain far and away the best paid on the planet. And U.S. drug companies charge Americans roughly twice what they charge the rest of the world for some drugs.

But the most galling financial consequence of the U.S. focus on restricting volume at the expense of price has been the rapid increase in administrative costs. The HMO bureaucrats who argue with doctors about whether patients can have drug x instead of drug y, or an extra two days in a hospital, cost money. So too do the clerks and nurses hired by doctors and hospitals to haggle with HMOs. Several studies indicate that U.S. administrative costs have soared. A 1996 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* reported that between 1968 and 1993 the number of doctors in the United States rose 77 percent, but that the number of administrators rose 288 percent. According to federal government figures, while U.S. spending on all health care (not including administrative costs) rose 196 percent between 1980 and 1991, administrative costs rose 350 percent. In short, the savings our HMO-dominated system has achieved by reducing the volume of medical services has been offset by ballooning administrative costs.

Understandably, Americans are not happy about a system that restricts their choice of doctor, impedes their access to care, and still costs an arm and a leg. A 1990 poll of citizens of ten industrialized nations—conducted jointly by Harvard, Lou Harris, and the Institute for the Future—indicated that Americans were the least satisfied with their health-care system. The appearance of the "HMO backlash" in this country in the last two years suggests that a similar poll taken today would find the United States still in tenth place.

The de facto U.S. policy of letting "competition" between HMOs control health-care inflation would be dubious even if it could be shown that the United States is spending less than other countries. But when evidence indicates that the HMO strategy has failed to control health-care spending, has not stemmed the rising tide of the uninsured, and has placed quality in jeopardy, it should be obvious that it is time to change our national policy. □

Kip Sullivan *is executive director of Minnesota COACT (Citizens Organized Acting Together), a citizen group working to enact a universal health insurance system and to save the family farmer.*

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CITIZEN SOLDIER

The how & the why of one man's war

James Finn

In the course of his fine article, "A Soldier's Legacy" (*Commonweal*, December 5, 1997) Robert Ostermann, a veteran of World War II, asserts: "Who says war is not criminal...speaks an inexcusable lie." That assertion is not as clear as it initially appears to be. For if war is criminal, who are the criminals, which of the participants? I ask the reader to keep the question in mind during the following description of my own personal reaction to reading *Citizen Soldiers* by Stephen E. Ambrose (Simon and Schuster).

Citizen Soldier is the history—chronological, statistical, descriptive, anecdotal—of the American soldiers who fought in Europe from June 7, 1944 (D-Day) to May 7, 1945, when Germany surrendered. Ambrose is a trustworthy historian, a fine writer, with a remarkable empathy for the men and women about whom he writes, particularly those in the front lines of the battle. He has produced an exciting but harrowing story. I could read it only in short installments.

In turning to this book, I was breaking an unformulated rule of not reading or recalling any particulars of World War II. But after more than fifty years I thought I could finally afford to do so, to learn the path I had taken as a member of Regiment 328, 26th (Yankee) Division, Third Army. For as a lowly infantry private during that conflict, I was as ignorant of the "big picture" and as unsure of where I was most of the time as any of the bewildered soldiers described by Tolstoy or Stendhal.

Almost every soldier who fought agreed that only those who actively engaged in combat could truly understand what it is like, but Ambrose, I believe, comes as close as any writer-historian can to communicating that experience. Drawing upon historical sources, interviews, and oral testimony he weaves together strategic plans, tactics, and actual incidents, the successes and the failures—including massive intelligence failures—the cowardly, the heroic, and the accidental, into a coherent narrative.

The reader is led through the fighting among the hedgerows of Normandy, the rapid advance across more open ground, the crossing of the Rhine, the deadly, useless, ill-advised push through the Hurtgen forest, the Battle of the Bulge, the surge into Germany, and the stunned entry into concentration camps. Along the way he encounters the various ground troops; the pilots of bombers, fighters, and Piper Cub spotters; officers and enlisted men, nurses and medics—all of the citizen soldiers of a democracy who had to be welded into the fighting unit whose courage and ability were the object of Hitler's early contempt.

Ambrose inquires into why these citizens of a democracy persevered and overcame. What were the principal motives that guided them? Was it patriotism? Simple necessity? Learned hostile response? Mutual trust and reciprocity among the soldiers? He makes insightful comparisons with the soldiers of the Civil War who invoked ideals of patriotism, honor, the cause, the flag, and with those of World War I during which such ideals were shot down.

Sideways, crabways, I approach those same questions. What did the army want with the skinny, nineteen-year-old kid I was when I was inducted? Could they plunk him into infantry training, teach him to take twenty-mile hikes loaded down with combat equipment, to take apart and reassemble an M1 rifle blindfolded, to cross a swift-flowing river, turn him into a sharpshooter, then into a scout who would take the lead as his platoon advanced into unfamiliar ground, who would go on night patrol behind enemy lines? They not only could but they did, each step seeming as unreal as it was unlikely to that soldier in the making. Ambrose offers snapshot glimpses of soldiers in combat. I offer some of that skinny kid, memories which return to me with the force and clari-

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ty that some vivid dreams have, sharp in detail but slightly surreal.

● On guard duty somewhere in France on a bright moonlit night, the shadows black and sharp-edged. I distract myself by kicking a stray GI boot down the slight slope in front of me. That is, I try to, for the boot scarcely moves and I gradually realize that it still encases a foot that is, in turn, firmly attached to the body that lies in its shallow grave.

● Lying flat on the ground in a thinly wooded grove, my ears filled with the noise of bullets and shrapnel passing overhead, my eyes fixed on the bloated dead body in front of me, I begrudge the thin layer of leaves that prevents me from hugging the ground even closer. I realize that I am not afraid of dying but that I am deathly afraid of being painfully wounded.

● In a small house in a deserted village perched on a hillside, we find a very large, flat-bottomed, clear green bottle practically filled with wine. As we drink it we look out over the valley and see planes firing at targets below them. The tracer bullets make beautiful abstract patterns against the dark sky. We have no idea if the planes are ours or theirs.

● After a long march, we pause in a relatively open field and are told to dig foxholes. Since we believe that we are likely to push on in only a few hours, most of us make only half-hearted efforts to dig deep. But an officer standing in a jeep, pistols visible in his holsters, drives around examining the area. Soon an order comes down. General Patton says we had better dig those #@%*$+ holes deep, and right now. A short time later we are glad we did. A couple of German planes that seem to have strayed into the area spray down bullets that thud heavily into the ground around us.

● On one of the few, sun-brightened days I am by myself—although I don't know how that could have been—as I enter a small, empty church. The roof has been partly destroyed. Shafts of sunlight pass through the jagged opening and pick out the gilt edges of the altar and meager ornaments. A great silence has fallen on the air and a great feeling of peace comes over me. It persists for some days.

● In the dark, our company has entered a rather dense forest heavy with rain mixed with snow. My then-buddy shares the surname Savage with a pulp-magazine hero and is automatically called "Doc," that character's nickname. Doc and I do our best to find a patch of ground where we can dig a foxhole big enough for both of us. In the bottom of the foxhole we make a small trench to hold the rising pool of water that gathers and, although our feet are already soaking wet, we try to keep them on the ledge each side of the trench. In spite of the fact that we can hear German voices not far from us, our weariness is greater than our fear, and we trust to our guards and the pitch-black night to provide security for us. I wake to hear gasping moans at the edge of our foxhole. Doc had waked with the morning light and had gotten out of the foxhole to look around. A sniper had shot him in the stomach. He dies soon afterward.

● In the same forest, the snow and cold continue. We have advanced almost not at all, expected supplies do not

'Loaded & fired machine gun...'

I was wounded by German artillery fire in the village of San Clemente in northern Italy in 1944. In the three autumn months before I was hit, I had been pulled off the line and assigned as a litter-bearer to carry bloodied Americans, as well as wounded German prisoners, from the battlefield to the nearest aid station or, beyond that, down the long, lonely, narrow mountain paths of the Apennines where, reaching lower ground and a road network, they could be evacuated by jeep or ambulance.

Through a foul-up at regimental headquarters, our small group—eight men, two squads, our names unknown—was unattached and accountable to no one. Nomads, we were left to roam free with our blood-stained stretchers, but were expected to be available night and day to serve where needed, battalion to battalion, company to company, as the front advanced. One afternoon, under a white flag, we went out three times to pick up our wounded among the rocks, face to face with German infantry across a saddle in the mountains, the third time bringing back a German medic who inexplicably walked away from the German line and surrendered to us. Being unattached to any battalion, we drew no rations or clothing; we begged food and stole blankets and lied to save our skins. It was a dirty life doing good.

After I was discharged from the army in 1946, I often felt desperately guilty for having survived. In varying degrees the troubled soul was not an uncommon reaction to such good luck. Even though I had spent more than a year recovering in army hospitals, I was safely home, and others were still in casts or walking crippled. Had I seen too many wounded? Had I seen too many dead? Did I owe something further to *my* rescuers: medics, doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, pilots, ship's crew?

In the early postwar years I found myself reluctant, or occasionally refusing, to eat full meals or meat meals when Europe was experiencing wrenching hunger (a "clean-your-plate/ children-are-starving-in-China" syndrome of remembered Catholic childhood). Even now I have not fully shaken the burden. My oldest daughter recently reminded me in front

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arrive, we cannot get dry, and we cannot take off our boots because putting still-wet socks and feet back into frozen boots is impossible. Getting out of my foxhole one morning, I stumble and fall in the snow. Getting on my feet, I repeat the performance. And yet again. I notice others performing similar antics. We are unable to walk. Some of us are driven to a barn where we are told to remove shoes and socks and dry our feet. Even if it's only to be a few hours we all feel a blessed relief. But our waxy-white feet begin to swell and turn colors. In what was to turn into a nine-months' passage through a string of hospitals, six months of which I can neither stand nor walk, my own turn into purple, then black, scaly balloon-like appendages that cannot suffer even the weight of a bed sheet. I learn that I have trench foot, a World War I term I had never heard before.

- In a hospital in Bournemouth, near the south coast of England, we hear the drone of V-bombs, the silence, and then the explosions. The brief periods of silence are the most frightening. In late December, casualties from what was to be called the Battle of the Bulge begin to stream through our ward and I learn that my outfit has been thrown into that battle. Alternating and intermingling waves of guilt for not being with them and gratitude that I'm not sweep over me. But as if to underline the difference between those on the front line and those in the rear, when the chickenshit officer in charge of our ward comes through for inspection, those of us who cannot stand are ordered to lie at attention in our beds. (Ambrose quotes Paul Fussell: "Chickenshit refers to behavior that makes military life worse than it need be, petty harassment of the weak by the strong...small-minded and ignoble....)

- Home again. As our hospital ship pulls into a New York Harbor, we can hear and see through a porthole the band that greets us. As we wait to be taken off the ship, kindly Gray Ladies—so named because of the gray outfits they wear—pass through with their welcome-back gifts. I am thrown into a frustrated, impotent, and incoherent rage as our smiling Gray Lady extends to me, and I silently accept, her gift of chocolate and comic books. Comic books! My feelings are only compounded when my three cabin mates pounce on them eagerly.

- Months later, at the hospital center at Camp Carson, Colorado, I receive my honorable discharge, one line of which reads: "EAME Ribbon, 1 Bronze Service Star Good Conduct Ribbon Combat Inf Badge." Like most other soldiers, I go back to pick up the loose threads of my former life.

My experience in the war was not as prolonged or as intense as many of those of whom Ambrose writes, nor the damage I suffered as severe. It qualifies me, however, to respond personally to the question of why we fought, of what forged us into fighting units, and to the question of the criminality of the war. Ambrose himself makes severe judgments of particular decisions and individual soldiers, not excluding the highest-ranking officers, even of Dwight Eisenhower whom

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of my grandchildren how I had insisted that my children clean their plates even unto adulthood.

Within the year after discharge from the army, I traveled to New York City, visited the offices of Catholic Relief Services, and hesitantly asked what I could do. "We need two engineers in Greece," it was suggested. I turned away. Laughably, I had among my baggage a separation record from the army's Fletcher General Hospital in Ohio that credited me with the literal but purposeless job description: "Loaded and fired machine gun at enemy positions. Used hand grenades and bayonet in training."

I remember standing at the site of a collapsed apartment building in the city and commiserating with the people who had lost their homes; I gave to every panhandler who crossed my path; I got sick to my stomach when I saw the nether side of Times Square.

Years later, in Boston, I watched as a woman dug through a dumpster for whatever she could find salvageable. Shocked by this poverty, I approached and the words poured out unwarranted and yet sincere, and I heard myself say loudly, "You don't have to do this!" and offered her money.

My time in Italy had taught me how to scavenge for food, how to steal, and how to lie in order to survive. I knew what it felt like. But I couldn't make the woman understand, and she ran away from me screaming. Suddenly brought to my senses, I headed in the opposite direction, stuffing bills into my pocket, lest a policeman find me and I would soon be in a cell trying to explain just what the hell were my bleeding-heart-liberal intentions.

Vincent, a friend of mine who volunteered for a time with the New York Catholic Worker on Christie Street, was later sent for by his parents in Detroit so that he could receive psychiatric treatment. I heard Midwestern, well-intentioned friends ask, "Why would Vinnie do a thing like that? The Catholic Workers are Socialists, aren't they? What was he thinking of?"

But I had some idea of what Vinnie was thinking.

JOHN LYNCH

John Lynch lives in Framingham, Massachusetts.

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he much admires. He notes, for example, that once battle lines became relatively stable, officers above the rank of captain rarely visited the front lines. From the rear echelons they ordered soldiers to fight in conditions they knew nothing about. As a consequence, thousands of young American and German soldiers died needlessly. The push through the Hurtgen forest was based on a plan that "was grossly, even criminally stupid."

The replacement system, Ambrose writes, was criminally wasteful and could have been easily corrected. "Its criteria was the flow of bodies. Whose fault was this? Eisenhower's first. He was the boss. And Bradley's. And Patton's." Ambrose adds that it could only be that "they had no conception of life on the front lines." The importance of this issue is indicated by the high turnover in different units. My division had a 119-percent turnover, far from the highest.

Ambrose confirms what I previously knew only as rumor. I got trench foot because General Omar Bradley had decided, in September 1944, that the campaign would be over before December. Instead of needed winter clothing, other supplies were pumped into the pipelines. As a result, the infantryman's clothing was "criminally inadequate" for Northern Europe's worst winter in forty years. Those who were ill-supplied and not rotated so they could get dry and warm, got trench foot. "Trench foot put more men out of action than German 88's, mortars, or machine-gun fire....some 45,000 men had to be pulled out of the front lines because of trench foot—the equivalent of three full infantry divisions." Many lost toes, feet, and, if gangrene set in, the entire lower leg.

Here some distinctions are in order. Rape, murder, theft, desertion—the seemingly inevitable accompaniments of war—are surely criminal. But the criminally stupid? The massively wrong decisions? The complacent ignorance of the rear-echelon commanders? The war itself? Here, rather than immediate labels, some legal and moral analyses are called for. And a return to the question of why we fought is helpful.

I believe the most common judgment to be correct. In combat we depended upon each other. Without thought or reflection, soldiers risked their lives for each other. Those ties were among the strongest they ever had or would have. We fought for each other. This is what joined us and transformed us into fighting units. But we also had implicit trust, I believe, in the decisions our country was making. Along the way, some soldiers learned additional reasons, like the major who said, when he first saw the inhuman concentration camps, "Now I know why I am here." And some of us learned later. Again, I believe a common judgment to be correct: What Hitler unleashed on the world was monstrously evil and it would have been criminal not to have opposed it. And I like to think that if that nineteen-year-old kid could have known more than he did and fully grasped this fact, he would have fought not only because he was called upon to do so, but because it was the right thing to do. □

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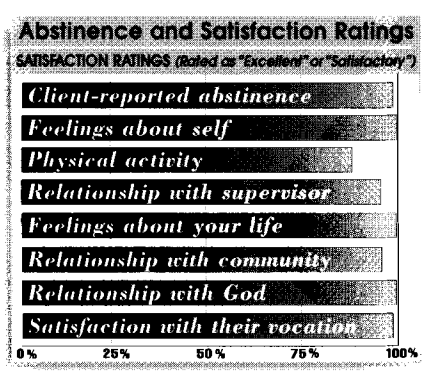

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Richard Alleva

A 'CLEF' HANGER

'Primary Colors'

I found Joe Klein's political *roman à clef, Primary Colors,* to be mostly a *clef* and quite insubstantial as *roman.* Once you got through the first fifty pages and aligned each fictional personage with his or her real-life counterpart (that one's Stephanopoulos! there's Carville!), scant novelistic pleasure was left in the way of characterizations, atmosphere, or political insight (as opposed to political knowingness, which the book had in abundance). And, the novel's protagonist, narrator Henry Burton—the black campaign manager of the Clintonesque Jack Stanton, and himself the grandson of a great civil-rights leader—is but a sketch for an interesting character that was never fulfilled.

But film is a medium that takes kindly to shallowness. In the Mike Nichols-Elaine May movie version, the characterizations remain thin, the political insights merely glib, and the film's Henry Burton comes across as even dimmer than the book's. Yet the movie turns out to be fun, sometimes exhilarating fun. Nichols's staging has verve and wit. He and his cinematographer, Michael Ballhaus, really know how to compose for the horizontal sweep of the screen. They revel in the to-and-fro bustle of crowded auditoriums, campaign headquarters, and the highways and squalid motel rooms of the primary odyssey. And Nichols, unlike many film directors who began in the theater, understands that not showing something can be funny. Just as Susan Stanton is about to explode at her husband for his latest infidelity, the director cuts to the couple being interviewed on a morning talk show where they are all smiles and mutual trust. Any competent director would have known that the jump from marital spat to TV hypocrisy would get laughs; Nichols's coup was in not showing any of the argument. The brawl that we haven't seen, the rage boiling under the televised billing and cooing, is precisely what makes us laugh.

Best of all, Klein's dialogue—a little too bright and brittle on the page—now has more weight and even more humor as arranged and abridged by Elaine May and spoken by a troupe of actors revelling in their roles.

John Travolta's make-up isn't convincing but his performance is. The graying hair seems at odds with the still youthful face, but he's got down pat the temper of a man so confident of his skills and, even more so, of his destiny that he feels licensed to risk self-destruction. Travolta uses the foggy Clinton drawl and good ol' boy grin as an actor, not as a mimic: he captures the sleepy strength and sensual enjoyment of struggle and manipulation to perfection. Only in Stanton's few outbursts of rage does Travolta fail by relying upon mere grimaces and shouts. To see Travolta in the current rerelease of *Grease,* where he is pure testosterone in trousers, and then to watch him here presenting a palette of emotional hues, is to be startled at the performer's growth.

My favorite film actress, Emma Thompson, plays the first lady-to-be and is mostly magnificent. Her triumph here in a film containing so much comedy is an odd one. She begins on a note of high, bubbly self-confidence and seemingly limitless verve and then, over the course of the film, as her husband's infidelities and the media din take their toll, drains herself of color. In the early scenes there is a slight vocal flaw: though Thompson manages the American vowels and diphthongs nimbly, they seem contradicted by the British high-comedy rhythms of the actress's delivery. But in the second half of the movie this flaw doesn't register; the actress has drawn us too close to the character for technicalities to get in the way.

The rest of the cast, with one exception, is adroit, with especially fine work from redoubtable Kathy Bates, frisky and fierce Billy Bob Thornton, and Tony Shalhoub, so convincing as an Italian in *Big Night* and equally convincing here as a Cuban. But the acting masterpiece of this movie is Larry Hagman's performance as a one-time governor who presents a serious challenge to Stanton. If Travolta shifts skillfully from emotion to emotion, Hagman hits three or four keys simultaneously: old-statesman dignity, a renewed but genteel lust for power, a truly damaging vein of weakness.

The one inadequacy here, of course, is Adrian Lester's Henry Burton. I say *of course* not because of Lester's limitations (this relative newcomer may prove to be a fine actor in other roles) but because the role itself is a trap waiting for an actor to fall into it. Though Burton's on-screen job as campaign manager is a hectic one, he never does anything dramatically tangy. When he isn't ordering aides around, Burton merely watches more interesting characters collide, snipe, and explode. An actor was needed (someone

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Tantur Rector Search Announcement

Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies in Israel invites nominations and applications for the position of rector. Tantur, located just outside Jerusalem on the road to Bethlehem, is a center for theological inquiry, Christian ecumenical studies, and interreligious dialogue between Christians and those of other world faiths, especially Jews and Muslims. The institute, jointly founded by Pope Paul VI and the University of Notre Dame, is a residential center for visiting scholars interested in the ecumenical and interreligious dimensions of scriptural, theological and pastoral studies. It also offers three-month sessions in continuing education for parish clergy, religious teachers and other church workers, as well as semesters of international study for undergraduates. Since its creation in 1971, over 3,500 Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans and Roman Catholics have participated in the programs.

The rector is the academic and administrative leader of the institute, and is responsible for the continuing development of its ecumenical and interreligious mission. With the assistance of the vice-rector and administrator, the rector oversees the educational programs and conferences, the finances, and the staff, and develops cooperative relationships with appropriate academic and religious persons to further the aims of the institute, both in the local and international arenas.

The successful candidate will possess significant experience in educational administration and a distinguished record of academic accomplishment in the area of biblical theology, ecumenical and interreligious studies, or related fields. Excellent management, communication, interpersonal and cooperative skills are necessary qualifications. A doctorate is preferred, and a working knowledge of Hebrew and/or Arabic would be strong assets in the position.

Nominations and applications will be accepted until May 1, 1998. Applicants should provide a letter of introduction, a current resume and four references. Applications should be submitted to:

Tantur Rector Search Committee
c/o Rev. Mark L. Poorman, C.S.C.
134 Hayes-Healy Center
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

like the Roscoe Lee Browne of thirty years ago) who could make watching interesting. Lester just doesn't have that kind of tacit power. So when Kathy Bates tells Burton that there is hope for him because he still has "an atmosphere of his own" it's a bad joke, for the actor playing Burton has none.

There are other lapses. The scene in which Kathy Bates as a troubleshooter almost makes her job literal by threatening to shoot off the genital jewels of a conniving lawyer is a purely farcical moment that is out of place in a comedy-drama striving for a certain verisimilitude. A brief subplot involving Burton's radical journalist-girlfriend makes her seem like a semidemented grievance-collector instead of the voice of Burton's conscience as indicated by the script.

And, most damaging to the overall impact of the movie, the action Stanton takes with blackmail information about his only formidable rival, Governor Picker (Hagman), struck me as both morally confused and dramatically unconvincing. At first Stanton wants to use the blackmail but a trusted aide, disappointed in her boss, commits suicide in despairing protest. To honor her memory, Stanton turns the evidence over to his rival with an assurance that it won't be used. Picker then gratefully drops out of the race. Hagman and Travolta bring this scene off convincingly but, in retrospect, how mechanically convenient it is that Stanton won't have to decide whether to renege on his assurance or not. Later, talking to Burton, Stanton declares that his abstention from blackmail wasn't the right thing to do because, had Picker not withdrawn and then gone on to win the nomination, he couldn't have won the election. And that would have—gasp! horrors! bring on the four horsemen!!— put a Republican in the White House. Based on what the movie shows us of Stanton, he would have sabotaged Picker in a media minute and saved all philosophical compunctions for after the election, just as he saved all regret over humiliating an earlier rival for the few minutes after that rival died of a heart attack. Sometimes hard-hitting, cynical political movies aren't cynical enough. □

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One big, happy family?

One Nation, After All
What Middle-Class Americans Really Think about God, Country, Family, Racism, Welfare, Immigration, Homosexuality, Work, the Right, the Left, and Each Other
Alan Wolfe
Viking, $24.95, 368 pp.

Martin E. Marty

Picture two high mesas, with a wide valley between them, and a range of artillery atop each. As militants constantly fire across at each other, some of the shells fall on the valley below. This is an image of "the culture wars" that has made sense to me.

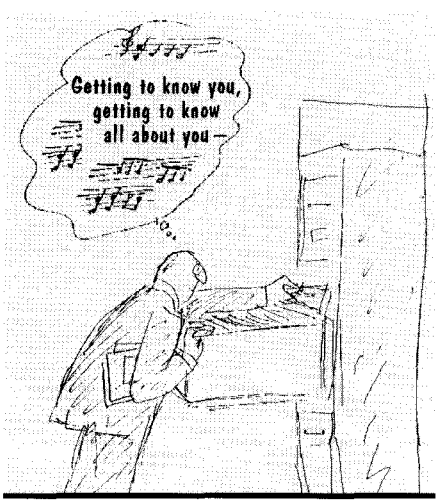
The militants, in that imagery, are the partisans in those culture wars. Polls will show that on most substantial issues, perhaps 10 percent of citizens can be counted at the activist extremes. Between them, in the valley, are 70 or 80 percent of their compatriots. This majority may care about the issues that have led to the hostilities, but they do not care as much or in the same manner, or they have other things to do than to fire away. Often they take their positions in the middle plain by distancing themselves from the camp that fired last or by taking refuge from the anticipated next fire.

Take "prolife" and "prochoice," in the pure sense of both. Pure "prolife" says, "Abortion is murder" or "Better two deaths than one murder." Pure "prochoice" really means, "A woman's body is her own, to do with what she wants." I don't want to get into the abortion issue—author and sociologist Alan Wolfe, who evokes my mesa image, has only three brisk references to it—except to say that either side may have a case. But massive data suggests that about 80 percent of the American people, most of whom say they are against abortion and are for choice, will side with neither extreme.

One Nation, After All confirms the prejudgments or conclusions of the mesa-image inventor, namely this reviewer. Mentioning that suggests that I have positive regard for Wolfe's effort, his ability to express himself well to a public, many aspects of his method, and most of the tentative conclusions he draws. I do.

To test the "culture wars" thesis, Wolfe wondered what most of the people think. By now it is well-known, for this is a frequently noticed book, that Wolfe interviewed middle-class citizens in a nation where most people consider themselves to be middle class. (By the way, the cannonaders will be middle class, too, so class is not everything.) Wolfe went to eight suburbs in four sections of the nation, listened carefully, and reports.

We who observe the American scene often discuss questions like this: Do you trust pollsters, interviewers, or gifted reporters to provide data and perceptions of American outlooks? Most of us answer yes. Polls tell you much that is useful. Wolfe, however, found that the answers to pollsters' most pointed questions remove all subtleties and force people to declare themselves too abruptly and too artificially. Perhaps he trusts interviews more than he should. After all, the interviewer can set up a framework in which distorted responses emerge. But in the case of the gifted reporter, from Alexis de Tocqueville and a host of other foreign visitors to the present, we have learned that the right pairs of eyes, ears, and hands can serve well to sum up and present this or that element of American life. It is in such company that Wolfe is most at home.



I wish he had been around in the fabled 1960s, the time of putative polarizations of the whole public. The polls I've seen suggested that there were not nearly so many profound fissures or revolutionary calls and reactionary responses as people on campuses or in the media suggested there were. Cameras have a way of reaching for the most colorful people, the most incendiary scenes. Reporters get bored by bourgeois apathy or by moderates. If young people today had nothing to go on but opinion polls, it is unlikely they would be able to discern much of a generation gap resulting from the response to events in that stormier time.

This is not to say that there are no issues on which Americans *should* be divided as they seek ways to live, to be just, to be productive. It is to say that most of them have lives to live without the noise of the artillery firers. They want to be just, but their favorite New Testament verse seems to be "Judge not, that you shall not be judged." And they do not think that the cannonading of elites or leaders of interest groups represents an instrument for enabling them to be productive.

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So Wolfe is surprised to see how at least casually patriotic most Americans are; how generous they are in their thinking about immigrants; how eager they are to be tolerant and the beneficiaries of tolerance. They won't make up a pack of conformists given to consensus, as the citizens of the 1950s were portrayed as being. They represent fluid, dynamic, viscous forces that can be reshaped and that can reshape themselves with more diversity and richness than the culture warriors will let them.

There are exceptions, and in the religious camp Wolfe finds one big one: otherwise tolerant heterosexuals are benumbed and bemused by, or resentful of, homosexuality. They want to "judge not" but often feel they are being judged and forced to judge by activists on the gay and lesbian front. Just why majorities chose that issue as the place to hold the line for prejudice Wolfe can't quite get clear from his interviewers.

In his informal and intuitive way, Wolfe provides a new agenda for those who will seek to do more precise pollings, more ample interviewing, and more revisionist judging. His is by no means a first word and by no means the last. His book will not force a cease-fire from the warriors or beguile them into one. But he may help more of the leadership of that (now I have to say "putative") moderate four-fifths of the nation find symbols, definitions, leaders, and causes so that they can at least start conversations or arguments about the good and common life. Culture wars, have we not noticed, are not conversations or arguments. What culture warriors call disagreement tends instead to be confusion.

Here is where I think Wolfe, an instinctively moderate person who uses methods that imply moderation, comes close to failing us: his suburbanites are chatting in circumstances where there are not many signs of stress or distress. Often in middle-class luxury we profess tolerances and sympathies that fade when tested. We Chicagoans used to be familiar with Serbo-Croatian picnics and weddings. Far away, Serbs now fight Croats, so their cousins here suddenly draw on passions they did not know they had. A community may express itself genially on racial issues, but when sudden racial change comes, everything is cast in a new and often blinding light.

Wolfe would help us with a second volume, where he would find eight middle-class communities at white heat over racial, ethnic, or religious matters—the crèche on the courthouse lawn, the Ten Commandments on the courthouse wall, or Sikhs wearing knives or Muslims wearing scarves to school—and listen to troubled and agitated citizens. Mention abortion (as Wolfe almost doesn't) or homosexual rights and lifestyles (as he chooses to do), and a very different America is likely to be manifest. One nation, yes, in a way. But it is too soon to say "after all" when we are still in the midst of things where majorities are potential recruits for those tending to profit from sidetaking in the culture wars. □

Martin E. Marty *directs the Public Religion Project of the University of Chicago, where he taught for thirty-five years. His most recent book relevant to this theme is* The One and the Many: America's Search for the Common Good *(Harvard).*

ONE BIG, UNHAPPY FAMILY

Europe Adrift
John Newhouse
Pantheon, $27.50, 339 pp.

Jorge Pedraza

The subtitle of John Newhouse's new book, "The Conflicting Demands of Unity, Nationalism, Economic Security, Political Stability, and Military Readiness Now Facing a Europe Seeking to Define Itself," brings to mind *Millennium*, a 1991 best-selling future forecast by Jacques Attali, the prolific French captain of industry *cum* cultural critic. Attali predicted that with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the tides of history were now turning. With the approach of the new millennium, a new unified Europe would, along with Asia, play the leadership role in world events and the new global economy. America and Russia, crippled by intractable internal social and political conflict, would be pushed to the periphery of the new world stage.

Seven years later, it seems that Attali got it almost exactly wrong. The Asian miracle has revealed itself to be largely a mirage sustained by foreign capital. Now that these resources have vaporized, what is left is a treacherous financial and political sinkhole that will remain for some time to come. The crisis has dramatized beyond any doubt that Wall Street and Washington are and

"Yes, yes, Fliegenheim, old continents are wearing away."

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will likely remain the bedrock for the global political economy.

Meanwhile, the major European players, buoyed by the extraordinarily strong American economy into sufficiently small budget deficits, apparently will be able to meet the requirements for the European Monetary Union. The effort, however, has revealed deep underlying social, political, and economic divisions within and among the not-so-united states of Europe. Intense internal political conflicts await each and every effort to integrate and prime the sluggish and fractured European political economies. With images of rioting unemployed in France and protesting farmers and fox-hunters in England fresh in people's minds, few people today are venturing to suggest that Europe is about to replace America as the economic and financial engine of the world.

Will a unified European leadership nonetheless exert a determining influence on global political matters? This is not out of the question. But the track record is not encouraging. During the harrowing developments following the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991, when America attempted to take a back seat, European leadership revealed itself to be dangerously dysfunctional. In this year's confrontation with Saddam Hussein, France joined Russia in playing "good cop" to the Clinton administration's "bad cop." This seems to show a much more realistic and indeed, since de Gaulle, familiar role for French if not European diplomacy. As a whole, however, Europe failed to act in any coherent or unified fashion. While England strenuously backed America, much of Europe remained uncomfortably noncommittal, and France snapped at America's heels from a safe distance along with Russia. One wonders what kind of decision would be arrived at if Europe needed to speak with one voice.

It is far from a millennially triumphant Europe that John Newhouse depicts in *Europe Adrift*. His portrait is of a Europe increasingly unsure of itself as it negotiates the troubled seas of political deadlock, social disaffection, military angst, and a disconcertingly protracted economic stall. Newhouse works in the time-honored tradition of the clubby statecraft analysis that one would expect from a foreign-policy journalist for the *New Yorker* who is also a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution, a consultant to the State Department, and a Beltway resident. He relies heavily on numerous private interviews with European diplomats and unnamed *cognoscenti*. One need only to recall, however, how embarassingly flat-footed most of the pundits were caught with the fall of the Berlin Wall to find oneself somewhat skeptical about their oracular pronouncements here.

The novelty of Newhouse's analysis comes in his macro-political thesis of the decline of the traditional nation states and the rise of what he calls the "superregions" or "bananas." Essentially, there are two of these—one swoops from London, down through Brussels, brushing Amsterdam but well east of Paris, through Lyons and the Ruhr valley. This banana intersects with another one that bends from Barcelona along the French Riviera through southern Germany and north-

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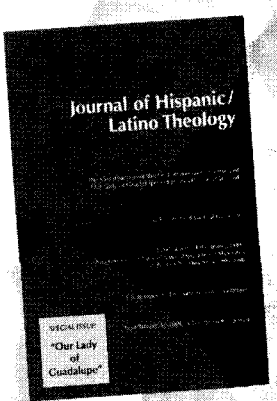

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ern Italy. National borders, as Jean Renoir reminded us in *The Grand Illusion*, are imaginary constructs that often veil more powerful distinctions and allegiances. History, argues Newhouse, is passing these outmoded fictions by replacing them with newer forms of collective identification, based on more pressing current-day passions and interests.

The energy that Newhouse sees driving the geographical realignments is principally economic. The superregions of Europe are defined precisely by their being the corridors of economic power and prosperity. Politicians and business leaders from these areas quite predictably chafe at their political and economic obligations to the central governments and poorer regions of their home countries. They fantasize about creating new regional entities with their robust neighboring economic partner regions. What neither they nor Newhouse bring up is that such realignments have a lot to do with the responsibility of national governments to provide social security benefits for people in regions that are not havens of prosperity. In other words, it's like gerrymandering districts by income in order to balance the budget.

The rise of the political clout of the superregions is undeniable. It would be naïve, however, to think that it's simply a question of replacing one set of boundaries with another, or even one vision of government with another. The political emergence of these regions takes place within the ongoing left/right, electorate/business deadlock in Europe. The vast majority of the voters wholeheartedly approve of the governmental benefits and protections espoused by the political Left . The arguments put forth by business and the political Right that Europe is becoming economically uncompetitive because of "handouts" to the undeserving, however, also resonates in economies persistently dogged by 13 to 14 percent unemployment. No amount of redrawing borderlines is going to escape this bind.

This political impasse gives way to another, crucial feature of the European political scene that Newhouse underemphasizes, that of racist xenophobia. All of the countries of Europe have shown evidence of the sympathy among disturbingly large portions of the electorate with the politics of scapegoating. Foreigners—especially those from Africa, the Indian subcontinent, or Eastern Europe—are loaded up with the freight of domestic economic and political frustrations. The ritual logic is to send them out in to the desert somewhere. The far Right says out loud what apparently many other Europeans say under their breath: *Raus Ausländer! La France aux Français!* The momentum of Newhouse's superregions is caught up in this ominous dynamic. It is no surprise that many of the most egregious cases of violence against immigrants come from the south of France and Germany, at the meeting point of the superregion bananas.

Newhouse is right, nonetheless, that in the absence of the comfortable securities of the cold war, Europe is now having to face up to some its most difficult political problems. Not the least of these will be the negotiation of the different political traditions in different countries as the monetary union begins to bite into the political autonomy of the member nations. The ritual dance of strike-and-concession of French political life, for example, will have to find its translation in a new pan-European political language. Otherwise, Europe might well go bananas. European unification might prove to be another costly or even tragic Grand Illusion. □

Jorge Pedraza *is a professor of French and Comparative Literature at Williams College.*

MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY

Pillar of Fire
America in the King Years, 1963-65
Taylor Branch
Simon and Schuster, $30, 746 pp.

Kevin Mattson

The civil rights movement was a rare time in American history when ordinary citizens placed their bodies on the line to challenge the nation's conscience. It was democracy at its best. As Martin Luther King, Jr., explained: "We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands." Just as important, the movement was politically adept in its ability to command the moral high ground, to persuade, and to wield power effectively.

Taylor Branch began telling the story of the civil rights movement in his magisterial *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63*. Here he picks up where he left off , narrating the history of the years 1963–65, when the movement won its two most impressive legislative victories—the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The tales he tells are well-known, and even if Branch fails, at times, to explain the significance of his stories, there is still much to learn from the details.

The biggest national crisis of 1963—the murder of JFK—transformed the civil rights movement. In *Parting the Waters*, Branch documented Kennedy's cold, amoral pragmatism as he pressed civil rights workers to stop fighting segregation and focus instead on registering black voters—a callous attempt to get the vote out for Democrats. Moreover, Kennedy gave blacks little protection from lynch-mob violence. Only the hideous attacks of 1963 on innocent black Sunday-school children and others in Birmingham provoked Kennedy to move on civil rights legislation.

It is a great irony of history, but perhaps a deep reflection of how political change occurs, that the Southerner, Lyndon Baines Johnson, not the Northeasterner Kennedy, did the most of any president for civil rights. Unlike Kennedy's technocratic and pragmatic approach to

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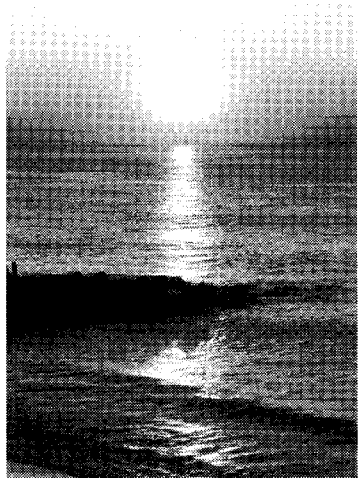
issues, Branch shows how Johnson's firm moral stand on civil rights helped to ensure legislative victory. Knowing that he was handing the South to the Republicans, Johnson never backed down from his desire, in his own words, to "help build a society where the demands of morality, and the needs of the spirit, can be realized in the life of the nation." Much of LBJ's moralism, writes Branch, could be attributed to a more relaxed attitude toward the threat of domestic communism—another move beyond the cultural and political stalemate of the Kennedy years.

Of course, LBJ could never completely overcome the most virulent and powerful anti-Communist in Washington—J. Edgar Hoover, the paranoid director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Branch plumbs deep here, exposing the extent of Hoover's threat not only to executive power (Kennedy actually cleared presidential statements through Hoover) but to King. Wiretapping and then sending the incriminating tapes to King, Hoover tried his best to break the civil rights movement. After reading Branch's account of the Hoover-King relationship, Robert Kennedy's assessment of Hoover as "rather a psycho" rings true. Scarier yet is to think that Hoover had held power for fifty years; more amazing still is how LBJ eventually cajoled him into helping out civil rights workers!

If Johnson faced a behind-the-scenes rival for power in Hoover, King faced his own challenge in the rise of Malcolm X. Today, Malcolm X is a hero for black nationalists. Though he moved away from the antiwhite sentiments of the Nation of Islam and journeyed to Selma in '65 in a rare show of support for King, Malcolm X remained a staunch opponent of integration and of King's nonviolent tactics. When Branch turns to this story, he reminds us of Malcolm X's rhetorical skills and rebellious machismo, what Branch calls his "swagger" and "bristling, military posture." "Any man who puts his women and children on the front lines is a chump, not a champ," Malcolm declared during the Birmingham protests. Branch also reminds us that there was little substance to Malcolm X's program. He never offered a clear agenda or a strategic alternative to King's nonviolent, grassroots movement. After all, he was much too busy either getting the goods on Elijah Muhammad's lecherous activities with younger women of the Nation of Islam or dodging assassins. Malcolm X's political weakness and marginal status made King's vision that much more powerful. And it is King's extraordinary vision for America that Branch rightly celebrates:

To hold the belief in justice among equal souls as the key to religious as well as political conviction seemed at once crazy and noble, wildly improbable and starkly human.... King called it a daring "extreme." He hailed luminous extremists in a paired roll call that included Jesus on the pure refusal to hate, Jefferson on equal standing in creation, Amos on the rolling waters of justice, and Lincoln on the crucible of democratic commitment: "This nation cannot sur-



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vive half slave and half free".... If indeed the long arc of the universe bent toward justice, and the universe proved friendly, history's slow triumph over slaughterhouse evil would be a compelling sign not only of benevolent design behind the cosmos but of a democratic bond in human nature. In King's tradition there were no proofs, only witnesses.

In painting his picture of the entire era, Branch also discusses the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the murder of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964 (and other, lesser-known acts of barbarism), the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party's failure to transform the Democratic party in the South, the urban race riots in Northern cities, and the rise of the political Right in the wake of Barry Goldwater's defeat. Importantly, King's first sense of puzzlement over whether the plight of African-Americans was solely racial or economic is also examined.

Although Branch's storytelling is nearly always provocative, his analysis is less cogent. Something more than narrative skill and a journalistic attention to detail is necessary to explain the meaning of the civil rights movement. For instance, Branch never explains the significant shift in King's tactics that took place during the years 1963-65. Much of this change in emphasis only becomes clear when King's activities of 1963-65 are placed alongside his earlier efforts. In 1955, King believed in struggling within the local community of Montgomery to change the attitudes of local whites—to build, through struggle and nonviolent force, a "beloved community." But by 1963, King was less intent on changing the minds of local Birmingham citizens and more determined to seize media attention and provoke a federal response. Since Branch uses 600 pages to cover but two years of history, l ader comparisons of this sort are impo ole for him to make. Whatever one t aks of King's changed tactics, they dem nd scrutiny and analysis, for it is here that one senses a tension between morality and politics—between principles, vision, and the demand for effectiveness—that had an enormous impact on future political activism.

Branch writes that the goal of *Pillar of Fire* is to establish that "King's life is the best and most important metaphor for American history in the watershed postwar years." Unfortunately, his reportage fails to support the thesis. For example, since Branch includes a myriad of characters here, King's life disappears for good chunks of the narrative. More intriguing is how throughout this period (and his entire life), King stands firm for nonviolence and integrationism. Yet at times—as witnessed in the urban riots beginning in 1965—the nation seems to be coming apart at the seams. In a way, the confusion and conflict within SNCC, resulting in the eventual expulsion of white members from its ranks, seems more emblematic of the state of the American soul than did King's abiding concerns. Branch's evidence suggests that the metaphorical prominence he gives King needs some rethinking.

That said, Branch provides an amazing overview of this period, bringing to life its central characters and conflicts. Even if Branch's explanation of what made these years so crucial remains unpersuasive, we have him to thank for telling these stories with great skill. For in them, America's rich moral struggle to become a better nation continues to live. □

Kevin Mattson *is author of* Creating a Democratic Public *(Penn State Press), which explores the Progressive Era struggle for participatory democracy. He is research director at the Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy (Rutgers University).*

The Payload

I am going off all the time, even when I sleep
or try to stay asleep. Bombs from the horizon
of my dream rip into my head, detonate
their drone until there's nothing but fire and noise.

Lying in bed as my own engines rev,
I nauseate from the sweat of machinery.
My legs bounce so hard they shake
my wife out of her sleep night after night.

My hands lurch above my pillow smack into glass.
I hear the hiss of acetylene torches weld
the cockpit locked around me. I plunge through air
toward the cruiser that grows too large, too quickly.

The last thought I have before going off is where to strike it.
You must decide which way it's going to be, the shrink tells me
after another false cardiac arrest. *This time the head, Big Guy.*
Next time the heart.

Peter E. Murphy

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The Work of Poetry

John Hollander

Columbia, $35, 318 pp.

Daria Donnelly

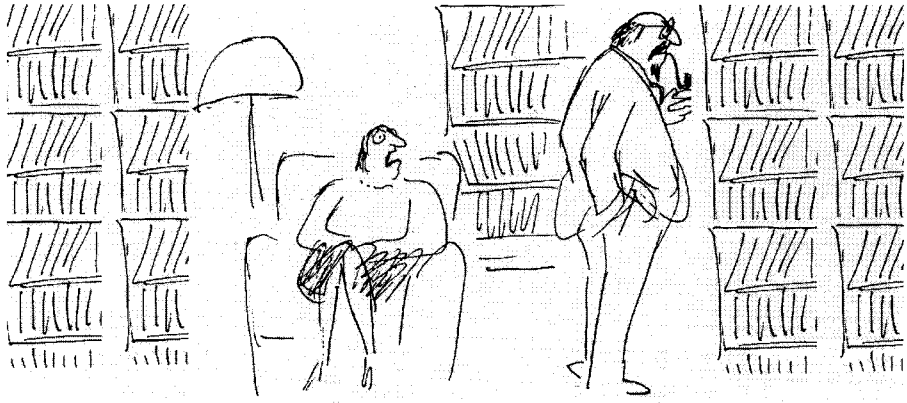
The Work of Poetry is a resonantly arranged and beautifully titled collection of twenty-three lectures, book introductions, and essays written over a twenty-year period by John Hollander, Sterling Professor of Poetry at Yale and much-honored poet. I say beautifully titled because the collection reveals itself as a sustained meditation on the multiple senses of the phrase "the work of poetry": a book dedicated emphatically not to inspiration but to the labor of poets and readers. Such emphasis reflects no special hostility on Hollander's part to the Muses, but rather his sense that we live in dark times, when language has become a coarse currency for crude thought, and poetry largely a form of cheap grace. In these conditions, Hollander wants to assert as strongly as possible that poetry is a demanding and life-giving human work. Densely allusive, richly autobiographical, digressively informative, and crowned by brilliant close readings that are Hollander's particular genius, these essays provide a crash course in poetry: what it has been, what it is, what it gives us when it is good, how poems work, what makes a poem masterful.

For me, the heart of the book is the essay titled "A Poetry of Restitution." Here Hollander considers (in the American context) whether poetry can help us be "greatly good," can restore "what has gone wrong with our own and society's lives." As unsatisfied by the Modernist segregation of the aesthetic from the moral as he is by contemporary poems that are politically or morally knowing, Hollander argues that the Modernist assault on the didactic function of poetry was so persuasive that the necessary and important restitution of that function can only come about when poems bear witness to their own diminished capacity to teach. Taking us slowly through three poems by James Merrill, John Ashbery, and A.R. Ammons respectively, Hollander shows contemporary American poems which nourish the moral force of the imagination by dwelling on the conditions under which they have come into being, and by making the reader "cooperate in their creation."

The Work of Poetry is a hymn to reading and an argument that reading (not the accumulation of raw life data or feeling) is the poet's most important work. Of the three headings under which Hollander has grouped his essays, two expressly chart his reading life. In "Poetic Experiences," he recalls momentous early encounters with the Psalms, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, and Wallace Stevens, as well as his formation within a generation of poets (poets whose first books appeared in the 1950s) which includes Ashbery, Ammons, Anthony Hecht, W.S. Merwin, and Alan Ginsberg. In "The Work of Poets," Hollander dedicates individual essays to the work of twelve poets, many not wellknown, from the Victorian period through his generation, whom he wishes to particularly recommend to us: Walt Whitman, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Lewis Carroll, Jean Ingelow, George Meredith, Trumbell Stickney, Edgar Lee Masters, Marianne Moore, Robert Penn Warren, Elizabeth Bishop, May Swenson, and Geoffrey Hill.

In every essay of *The Work of Poetry*, and perhaps most especially in the first section, "Poetic Substances," where poetry is considered in relation to dreams, work, restitution, and originality, the irrepressible Hollander supersaturates his sentences with information and insight gleaned from a lifetime of reading. His best paragraphs are glorious digressive rifts of allusion, my favorite a catalogue of mountains—a resonant evocation of "Vision," poetically and religiously conceived—that is provoked by A. R. Ammons's line, "I went to the summit and stood in high nakedness":

> But the summit of what? There are several kinds of mythical mountains. Olympus as a region, seat, or dwelling place of the gods; Parnassus as a scene of specifically poetic elevation; Sinai as a high point of revelation and transmission of the holy law; Pisgah as a supreme point of overview, of what can be vouchsafed in vision but not directly possessed or inhabited; Spenser's Mount of Heavenly Contemplation, his beautiful Acidale, his part-local part-universal Arlo-Hill; Milton's Niphates upon which Satan alights and the pinnacle from which the other Satan (in *Paradise Regained*) "smitten with amazement, fell." All are paradigmatic of later mountains (as indeed the earlier ones in this list are of those at



"I've had it up to here with your perfect choice of words!"

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the end of it) in subsequent poetry. (Only Ararat seems a nonce occurrence—a point whose height does not reach toward a higher realm, or provide views of the lower one, but that becomes, at the subsiding of the Deluge, the new First Ground. And, at the other end of the list, there is Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, in no way a typical revision of any of these.)

The poet Richard Howard perfectly described Hollander's work as trusting in the possibility of "a teeming surface bearing one to a high place." Hollander achieves such transport in that parenthetical reflection on Ararat. Each of these essays — some pyrotechnically allusive, others warmly crowded with recollected poems and literary friendships — asks the reader to work hard and, at almost every paragraph, repays our labor. Hollander's essays so successfully unsettle the generic boundaries between poetry and prose writing that you may be ruined for the business-as-usual prose of the majority of other critics, even if bewildered by his subordinating argument to description.

When I got bogged down it was not because of the diverting gems laid down in the path of each essay but rather because I was so disheartened by the bitter and barely limned portrait of the state of American poetry and poetry teaching. Hollander's effort to restore our sense of an enlarging poetic past does not require a blighted poetic present. Unfortunately readers unfamiliar with contemporary poetry will not recognize his portrait as caricature; those who do may prematurely put down the volume. *The Work of Poetry* finds Hollander perhaps overindulging the temptations that beset us with advancing age, but more in evidence is the suppleness of writing and thought that makes his poems such potent witnesses for the ongoing vitality of formal verse. □

Daria Donnelly *has taught literature at Brandeis and Boston University.*

WE'RE ALL CAPITALISTS NOW

The Commanding Heights
The Battle between Government and the Marketplace That Is Remaking the Modern World
Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw
Simon & Schuster, $26, 447 pp.

Charles R. Morris

Shortly before he died, the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin commented in an interview: "Where is there an active Left now? In Latin America, maybe; maybe in Korea. When I was young, there were left-wing leaders in England—Laski, Cole, Tawney. Where are they now? *Où sont les neiges d'antan*? It is the first time this has happened for two hundred fifty years."

The rise and fall of the political Left since the midnineteenth century is, in many ways, the story of a shifting consensus on practical economics. Radical intellectuals, even as late as the French Revolution, gave relatively little thought to questions of wealth and property; François Babeuf, the revolution's "Gracchus," was one of the few proto-Communists in its ranks. The revolt against royal authority in America was led by a conservative propertied and professional class.

The notion that equality of possession is prerequisite to equality of rights became radical doctrine only after the violent upheavals of 1848, when Marx began to weave disparate strands from Hegel, Ricardo, Saint-Simon, Fourier, and others into a grand synthesis that became the charter for the intellectual Left for the next hundred years.

The evident failure of the capitalist system in the 1920s and 1930s seemed the final vindication of the Socialist idea. Private enterprise led to monopoly, war, colonialism, and the immiseration of the working classes. Economics was too important to be left to the blind and violent whims of a "market" that was usually rigged in favor of the rich anyway. Whether the state should direct the economy was rarely questioned: the challenge was merely to find the right tack between Stalinist bludgeoning and less intrusive modes of Keynesian guidance.

For at least a generation, centrally directed economies appeared to be the world's most successful, leading to a considerable crisis of confidence in America, the country most resistant to Socialist ideas, especially after the Soviet Sputnik launch in 1957. But the political Left allowed its cause to become so tightly tied to specific theories of economic organization that it was exposed and vulnerable when Socialist economies started visibly lagging about twenty years ago; and then the last remnant of true believers were put to ignominious flight by the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989.

Surely, this is the stuff of grand narrative, a project for a writer with the flair and intellectual sweep of a Hugh Thomas or a Paul Johnson. Daniel Yergin, who won a Pulitzer for *The Prize*, a history of the quest for oil, has the credentials for such a challenge, and *Commanding Heights*' splendid title—taken from Lenin's description of the government's place in the economy—raises hopes. (The name of the second author, Joseph Stanislaw, a business associate at Yergin's consulting firm, is in much smaller type, so one must assume that this is Yergin's book.)

Sadly, *Commanding Heights*' ambitions far exceed its powers. Instead of grand narrative, we get a dutiful compilation of potted little economic histories of almost every country in the world—or at least it feels that way. There are six-and-a-half pages on Poland, a page-and-a-half on Czechoslovakia, three pages on Bolivia, two on Chile, three on Argentina. China gets a whole chapter to itself, and Russia most of a chapter, although there is more on India than on China and Russia put together. Taiwan, Hong Kong,

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and Singapore each get a couple of pages; Indonesia, the Netherlands, and the Philippines a few paragraphs.

Every story is essentially the same. Once all the best people were Socialists or Communists, or at least believed in a strong, directive, economic role for the state. Now they don't, and everybody is much better off. Or if they're not better off, as they demonstrably are not in Russia, they surely soon will be. Along the way, we get snippets of intellectual history—Keynes vs. Hayek, Milton Friedman and the Chicago School monetarists descending on Chile—everything blurred and forced into the same freeze-dried package.

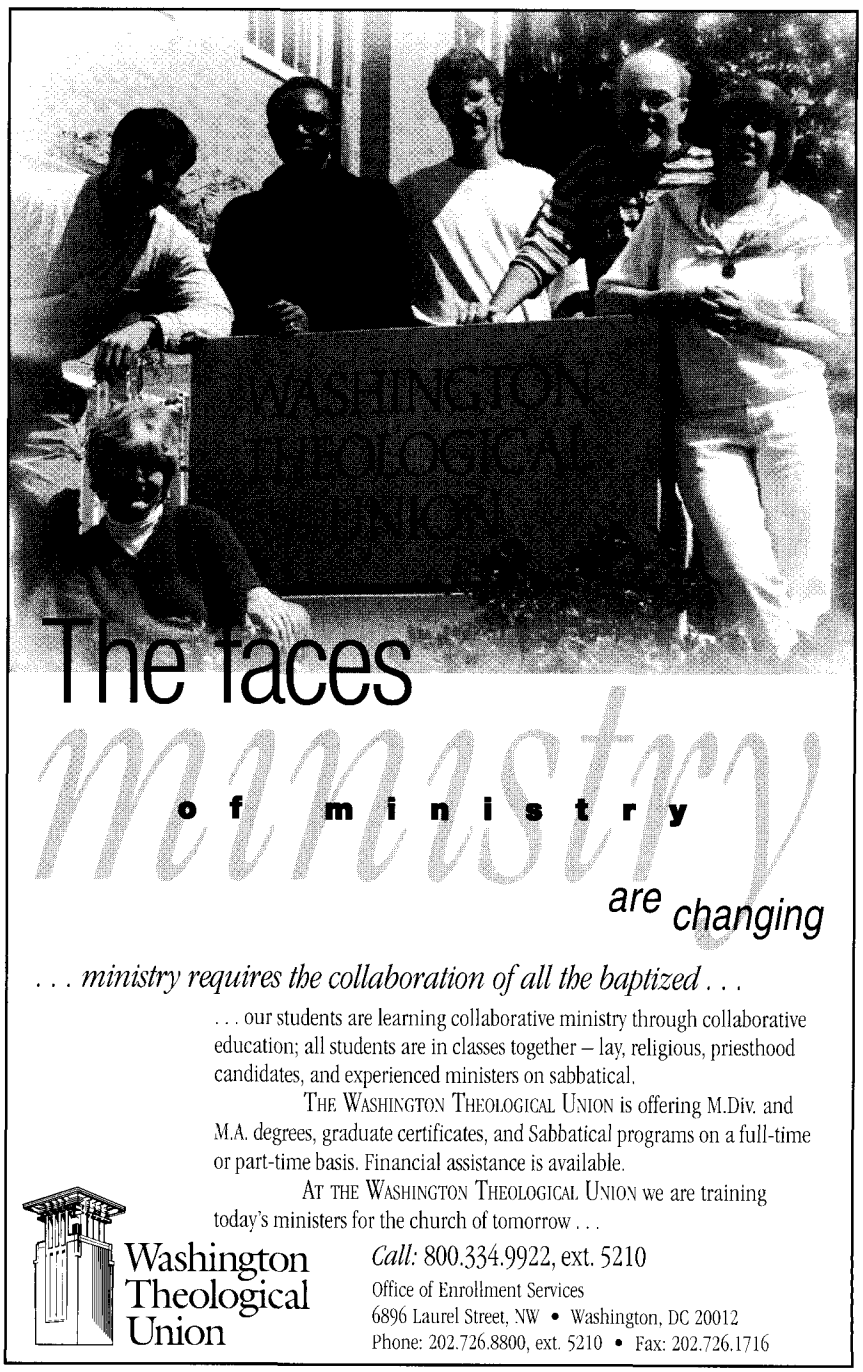
The narrative is clouded with much irrelevant detail, of the kind that case writers dredge up to give *a faux* immediacy to business-school textbooks. So a section on India opens with "Manmohan Singh was due for lunch at friends' in New Delhi on June 21, 1991. That very morning, however, his wife called up the hosts to say that they would have to cancel." What a coincidence, being appointed finance minister on the very morning you are scheduled to have lunch with friends!

There is little real analysis. What caused the 1980s developing-country debt crisis? ask the authors, and respond fearlessly: "Growing debt, rising interest rates, and falling revenues." They describe the great French U-turn of 1983. François Mitterand, after years of grassroots effort, succeeded in rebuilding the Socialist party and led a left coalition back to power in 1981, promising a decisive "break with capitalism." Two years later, amid rising unemployment and inflation, Mitterand recanted and stood aside while his finance minister, Jacques Delors, engineered a French version of a Thatcherite turn to the right. "In fifteen frenetic months, Delors began the great task of modernization that his successors would carry on."

But just a few pages later, we are told almost as an aside that "in 1982, French Socialists feared crossing the threshold of 2 million unemployed. In 1997, the number is over 3 million. Among school dropouts, the rate of unemployment is 29 percent." Shouldn't the authors have something to say about that? Is the great experiment working or not? How do you tell? In the same vein, isn't it just a bit early to opine that "Tony Blair's great accomplishment was to fuse social-democratic values of fairness and inclusiveness with the Thatcherite economic program"?

Intellectual consensus is always a danger signal, and the self-satisfied preening over the triumph of capitalism probably means that we are on the brink of some huge, unforecastable explosion. Compare the "end of ideology" theorists of the early 1960s, and John Kennedy's famous 1962 declaration that there were no ideological issues left, "only technical problems, administrative problems." A first-rate analysis of the kind that Yergin and Stanislaw have attempted would make fascinating reading. Too bad that it is still sorely needed. □

Charles R. Morris, *author of* American Catholic *(Times Books, 1997), is completing a book on financial innovation and risk.*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(Continued from page 4)

in and out of the hierarchy. Clearly a student of Newman, Dulles seemed almost wistful, admitting how attractive Newman's analysis was to him. At the same time, he seemed to want to preserve the centralization of the theological endeavor that the Vatican has championed from Newman's time to now.

The implied conflict, which has since erupted into the open with his charges that the CTSA is full of neo-Reformers, results from Dulles's explicitly clerical norm of conformity taking the place of a properly theological obedience of faith. Newman himself lamented that, in the wake of Vatican I, there were so many bishops for whom obedience to authority was far easier than believing. In the wake of Vatican II, which allowed the hermeneutics of suspicion into the house of theology, Dulles and even more traditionalist theologians are calling for a countervailing hermeneutics of trust, but end up defending the clerical monopoly on all three offices of teaching, governing, and sanctifying (which means keeping the clergy male, celibate, and compliant).

But this kind of traditionalism, flying in the face of Newman's own dynamics of theological development, is a presumptuous action bound to create an equally presumptuous adverse reaction. Like virtue and truth, grace is going to be found between the partisan alternatives. Peter Steinfels's wise words said as much.

But one wonders how grace will out when even the loyal opposition (what the CTSA represents) gets pilloried for not toeing the Vatican line. At least Newman could envision "a new pope and a new council" righting the balance. Can we hope for as much?

PAUL E. DINTER
Bronx, N.Y.

Master Macy

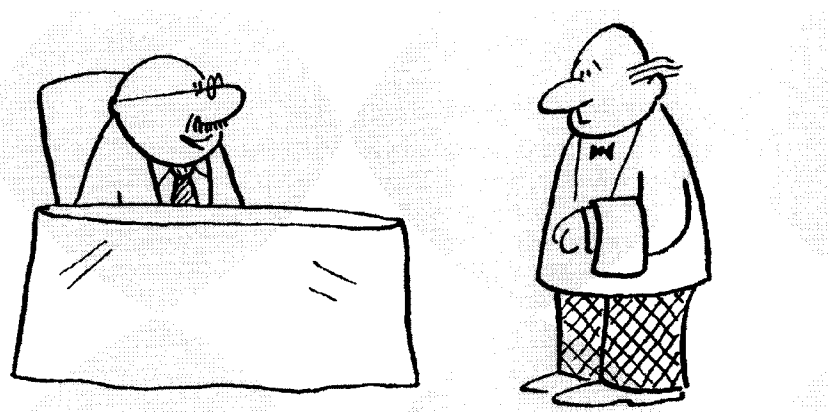
Peter Steinfels taxes the major addresses at the 1997 CTSA meeting with "imbalance...strange Pollyannishness,...inexplicable lack of irony, self-doubt, or tragic sense." I was there, and cannot understand how Steinfels could so describe Gary Macy's plenary address on "spiritual communion" in the Middle Ages—particularly since Steinfels admits that it was "a paper well-calculated to destabilize conventional Catholic assumptions" about a lot of issues.

Macy described a widespread medieval understanding that the sacramental sign serves to engender spiritual communion—that the latter is the goal of the former, not its pale imitation. I, like other Catholics, was brought up to think of "spiritual communion" as a lesser recourse "when actual reception of [sacramental Communion] is illicit or physically impossible" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*), not as the goal of such reception, a goal attainable even where the priest alone receives sacramentally. Yes, Macy offered an analysis of that practice in terms of trade-offs in ritual power between laity and clergy at that time, with advantages accruing to each, and drew attention to parallel phenomena in the church today. But as I was listening, I was also working out a lot of the other implications of Macy's data, and they stubbornly resist ideological categorization. They obviously favor promoting adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; less obvious, but equally powerful, is the twist given to the ecumenical question of intercommunion (if spiritual communion *is* the reality we seek in the Eucharist, then we may do it now, and sharing sacramental communion can, as the Vatican urges, be postponed until unity between the churches is completely consummated). Perhaps the strongest implication is for catechesis on the Eucharist: If consuming the consecrated species is not the main thing, but is supposed to feed spiritual communion, then we will need to emphasize recollection, reverence, and reflection, and give instruction on how to pray interiorly.

Macy's paper offered discomfort to everyone in the audience no matter what their theological positions, while indicating a new way to think about perennial and largely intractable problems. The "unalloyed approval" given to his paper reflects the fact that theologians in the CTSA will gladly learn new ways to think, even at the cost of some disturbance to what they thought they knew, and even though those new insights come from scholastic theology. Would Steinfels have been less dismissive if Macy's address had been less open to multiple constructions? Does Steinfels want to canonize the "conventional Catholic assumptions" incorporated in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*?

(REV.) MICHAEL SLUSSER
Pittsburgh, Pa.

The writer is associate professor of theology at Duquesne University.



"Just bring me some controversy—I thrive on controversy."

Wrong venue

We are dismayed by Avery Dulles's commentary about the academic work of the CTSA, whose members through

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prayer and discussion inductively reached a communal decision to endorse a report documenting serious doubts about the CDF's assertion that limitation of priestly ordination to males is a matter pertaining to the deposit of faith. The precise nature of this resolution was reported on by a number of journalists and remains a topic of debate among academics. Intellectual debate within the confines of professional societies and journals is a legitimate and necessary part of church life, supported by the instruction *Communio et progresso* (January 29, 1971): "Experts enjoy the freedom required by their work and are free to communicate to others, in books and commentaries, the fruits of their research . . . [although] new opinions circulating among theologians, at times, circulate too soon and in the wrong places."

Sadly, discussions of the history and authority of the church relative to many issues have moved from being reported upon in the public press to being debated there in a nonscholarly and noncollegial fashion. Surprisingly, Father Dulles has removed himself from scholarly debate and now presents his views—in this case with anger and sarcasm—in newspapers and other popular publications.

The errors in his *Commonweal* commentary were accurately diagnosed by Sister Mary Ann Donovan, CTSA president. In addition, Dulles is terribly wrong about the Catholicity of the CTSA. By contrast to the annual meeting of approximately 7,000 members of the American Academy of Religion and Society for Biblical Literature (AAR/SBL), the annual convention of some 470 members of the CTSA is so deeply concerned with Catholic issues, so devoted to the life of the church, and so centered in the liturgy that its true Catholicity is indubitable. Some Catholic scholars avoid the meeting because it is "too churchy" and "too Catholic."

Normatively, Dulles can certainly dispute the positions taken by theologians and by the CTSA, and we would encourage him to do so in the proper fora. But journalism and theological investigation are separate undertakings. Repeated attacks in newspapers and popular magazines are hardly contributions to theological work. The discussions within the CTSA and in other scholarly meetings and journals are respectful investigations by professionals. Reporting on them in popular media is legitimate. Public campaigners who take theoretical arguments and insights out of context, subject scholars to personal attack, and fail to present evidence for their own conclusions, all without engaging their opponents' evidence or conclusions, violate both the ecclesial vocation of the theologian and the ordinary norms of academic integrity.

We welcome intellectual debate and reportage, each with its proper substance, tone, and fora. But we cannot allow the two to be either combined or confused, for such is a disservice to both the church and the academy.

TERRENCE W. TILLEY
Dayton, Ohio
PHYLLIS ZAGANO
New York, N.Y.

The writers are co-chairs of the Roman Catholic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion; Professor Tilley is president of the College Theology Society.

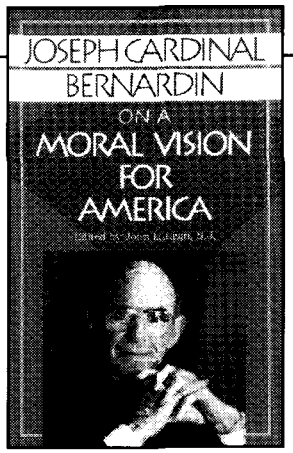
The editors regret:

We were both dismayed and amused to learn that Professors Tilley and Zagano think that *Commonweal* and other demotic rags are not an appropriate place to air the heady theological disputes that preoccupy the clerisy. Upon a moment's reflection, however, we were consoled by the obvious parallel between the Tilley/Zagano complaint and the church's traditional demand that theological debate be kept behind closed doors lest it confuse and give scandal to the contented sheep in the pews.

The more things change...

Keep talking

Being neither a member of the CTSA nor an attendee at the 1997 convention, I am not in a position to com-



A Moral Vision for America
Joseph Cardinal Bernardin
John P. Langan, S.J., Editor

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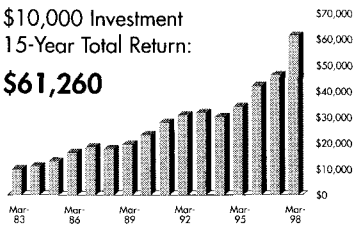

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ment on the *Proceedings* of the conference. However, everything to which Father Avery Dulles objects is common currency in the field of present-day sacramental theology. Anyone who reads the current literature, is familiar with theological faculties, or attends conferences knows this well. Sister Mary Ann Donovan mounts a defense that is not in the end compelling because, though it appears to refute Dulles, she ends up for the purposes of defense placing herself in a position considerably to the "right" of the operative convictions of American sacramental theology—a position I do not believe she generally inhabits. Nevertheless, I do agree very much with Donovan's call for careful and respectful dialogue. *Commonweal*, better than most publications, is well positioned to advance such dialogue.

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THERE GOES THE CHURCH

Virginia Aultman-Moore

Last month, the faithful at Saint Ursula's mission in Pursglove, West Virginia, engaged in a poignant defense of their sixty-five-year-old country church before an administrator from the diocese of Wheeling/Charleston. The crisis? The shortage of priests, and a reconfiguration of existing parishes in nearby Morgantown threaten the continued existence of this tiny congregation.

Saint Ursula's has survived crises before, including fire and flood. Four years ago, the church had been limping along with falling revenues and declining membership, when a newly ordained, energetic pastor accepted responsibility for the mission. A reinvigorated church responded to new opportunities for worship and community service. They invested money and labor in redecorating the interior, bringing back a gleam to the wooden pews and nut-brown walls, freshening up the colors in the sanctuary, and reconfiguring the worship space. On a typical Sunday, warm sunlight floods the cream-tinted windows while the original bell proclaims the start of Mass. Newcomers (like myself) are noticed and warmly welcomed.

As a member of Saint Ursula's sister parish, it was through volunteer work at Saint Ursula's food pantry that I first came here. When parishioners raised money for their pantry by transforming it into a dance floor last year, some of the older parishioners didn't miss a dance, while the pastor captured the polka title.

The result of this parish renewal has been that over the last four years, membership has doubled and financial reserves have grown exponentially. Despite this success, parishioners now face the distinct possibility that their church will have to close.

On an early March evening, the mood is anxious as people await the start of the town meeting. This time the threat to their church's existence comes not from the coal companies or merchants who have abandoned the area to economic decline, or even from the state's highway commission which is considering a new four-lane corridor through town. This time, parishioners must defend their church to their own leadership. The diocesan representative is friendly and apologetic, but explains that the diocese must make some difficult choices. He invites a response and listens attentively as the group, gathered in the basement, attempts to rally a defense.

A member of the parish council reads a prepared letter, a polite, ardent plea for survival, then points to a display of charts and figures. The floor is opened to the parishioners who, one by one, stand to praise their small church. White, but not white-collar, these people are neither lawyers nor wordsmiths, but among them are gifted cooks, gardeners, laborers, homemakers, and sometimes polka dancers. They are a motley bunch, not unlike the original disciples. Their accounts are halting and sometimes miss the mark. But through their very personal testimonies, a patchwork image of a community emerges: colorful, textured, worn, but not worn out.

"There will be no sermon today, so that we can go right into our committee meetings."

"My husband and I have been part of this parish for thirty years and we've been through a lot with these people. It's like home. I can't imagine goin' nowhere else." (Female, fifty-five.)

"I wasn't goin' to church at all for years, but started back when Father started changin' things around here. Now I come every week with my eighty-two-year-old mother. If you close this church, I ain't goin across the river. Them people look down their noses at us from around here." (Male, forty.)

"How about if you go ahead and reinstate some of them married priests? There'd be plenty of priests then. . . ." (Male, sixty-five.)

(Tearfully) "A few years ago, I had stopped being Catholic. I tried the big churches across the river, but I felt out of place. But I've been coming here and I feel welcome and accepted. This is an important place for me and my daughter." (Single mother, mid-thirties.)

"When people come to our food pantry, we don't just hand them their food. A lot of them want to talk, so we talk. They tell us their troubles. Sometimes we cry with them." (Woman, sixty.)

For about an hour, the testimonies continue. Finally, the priest from Wheeling declares that our concerns have been heard and will be communicated to the bishop. A decision will be forthcoming in May.

Similar town meetings are scheduled through April at two other Morgantown parishes, including my church, where similar dramas will be replayed. It is an experience more American Catholics will undergo in coming years. □

Virginia Aultman-Moore *is a social worker living in Westover, West Virginia.*

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